

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE CAPITAL OF DIVERSITY: DIFFERENCE,
DEVELOPMENT, AND PLACEMAKING IN
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Justin Thomas Maher, Doctor of Philosophy, 2011

Dissertation Directed by: Professor Mary Corbin Sies
American Studies

Diversity has long been a part of the urban landscape, both as a demographic fact and as a valuable commodity used to attract development. Both kinds of diversity move through Columbia Heights, the rapidly (re)developing neighborhood in Washington D.C. that serves as my case study. It is home to residents of varying racial, ethnic, sexuality and class-based identifications as well as the rhetoric that selectively values them.

In this dissertation, I argue that a rhetorical commitment to diversity has been an integral part of uneven development in Columbia Heights. It is the cornerstone of neoliberal development, a process in which government subsidized, private development benefits middle and upper-middle class (often white) residents, while low-income residents of color are increasingly denied quality housing, employment, and education.

This interdisciplinary project draws on urban, cultural, ethnic, and queer studies scholarship to illustrate how representations of difference affect material development. I argue that they create ideological “maps” of the neighborhood that value some markers of difference while erasing and policing others. In turn, these maps guide who invests in the

neighborhood and who belongs where. I chart how representations have changed over time, from the appropriation of civil rights rhetoric in the mid to late 20th century, to more recent multicultural imagery and gay-led gentrification narratives used to sell a “new,” upscale Columbia Heights.

Using a mixed methodology of textual and ethnographic analysis, I examine different sites of discursive production: city planning documents, real estate marketing, and an online neighborhood listserv. I also interview longtime and incoming Columbia Heights residents with various social locations, illustrating how dominant narratives of difference and development are reinforced and/or challenged among residents.

This project expands existing development, gentrification, and gay enclave scholarship. It challenges singular analyses of difference and examines how multiple markers of difference affect spaces. All middle-class newcomers are not white, nor are all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer residents middle-class. In addition to suggesting policy solutions, I suggest how “contact” between residents of different social locations has the potential to counteract uneven development and the discourse that reinforces it.

THE CAPITAL OF DIVERSITY: DIFFERENCE, DEVELOPMENT AND
PLACEMAKING IN WASHINGTON D.C.

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2011

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In memory of my mother, Nancy Maher

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It goes without saying that a project this enormous is not something that can be completed alone. This dissertation is the result of years of collaboration and support from every corner of my life. Firstly, this would not exist if it were not for my willing respondents. The people I spoke with let me into their homes, their front stoops, and their lives. Ethnography done right is collaboration and some of the most insightful things I hope this dissertation says came from the serious reflections residents offered me. In addition to all of the time they took to talk with me, many were kind enough to turn friends and family onto my project. The number and quality of interviews are a direct result of “Valerie” and “Rachel’s” tireless effort. They took me door to door and stoop to stoop introducing me to my respondents. As an incoming resident of Columbia Heights I worried about longtime residents’ wariness to participate. I am so thankful that that fear never materialized and that so many different people with different stories thought this project was deserving of their insight. Similarly, a dissertation is only as good as what it analyzes. Because of that, I am indebted to the helpful staff at the Washingtonian division of the Washington D.C. Public Library and the cooperation of the Washington, D.C. Office of Planning.

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Mary Corbin Sies. From her exhaustive line edits to her interest in my ideas so many years ago, she has been there to challenge me to go further and supported me through all the hurdles that spring up throughout this process. I have been honored to have a mentor willing to push beyond what’s out there to find the idea that is truly unique and radical. My dissertation

committee has steered this project to where it is today. Christina Hanhardt has gone out of her way to be a careful and thoughtful advisor. More importantly, her excitement about my work has sustained me through any crisis of confidence.

John Caughey taught me to value the person and story rather than the easy sound byte. I thank him on behalf of myself and my respondents. Their reflections would not have been nearly as carefully represented without him. Sheri Parks has given me new ways to think about how culture operates and her wisdom helped the genesis of this project. Finally, James Cohen has gratefully given me the opportunity to step outside my comfort zone into the world of urban studies. His expertise and generous input are woven throughout this dissertation.

It is not easy to toe the line between colleague, editor, muse, and dear friend. Christine Muller, Patrick Grzanka, Amelia Wong, and Kirsten Crase did just that and did it with grace. From long work sessions camped out in multiple coffee shops to well needed “Senior Summer” recuperation, they have provided the fuel that has kept me going. Their intellectual work has inspired my own and I cannot wait to see what they will think of next. For showing me that data can be fun, I thank Katie Brown. I also want to thank Jennifer and Jason Smith for reminding me that there’s always time for sushi.

Like the transplants discussed throughout this dissertation, I too call multiple places home. My friends and family in Massachusetts have made all the airfare and mileage well worth it. Molly Geidel, yet another brilliant scholar I am thankful to know, has provided me with friendship and guidance since we met at my lifelong intellectual HQ, University of Massachusetts at Boston. Going back even further, I thank Christine Capaldo for supporting me through every stage of my career. My favorite “doctoral

candidate,” Lisa Angelo, has helped bring these stories to the page, tirelessly transcribing all of the ethnographies and cracking me up along the way. Special thanks to Carmel Chisholm for being my intellectual and emotional sounding board. Though this dissertation comes to a close, our philosophical co-journey does not. For countless chats, visits, and Sunday dinners, I thank my brothers and sisters Michelle Maher, Jessica Bloomer, Christopher Maher, Michael Maher, and Lindsay Maher. It has been hard being away, but they always made sure I never felt like I was.

I want to extend special thanks to Tom Hardej, my partner in crime and in life. The passion laced throughout this dissertation is a direct result of his love and support. I’m so lucky that he and I have collided and I look forward to what his fierce intelligence and empathy engender next.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Nancy Maher. Every shred of empathy and political commitment in me has been the direct result of her guidance. I am eternally grateful to have been able to share this project and every other endeavor with her. I will miss her support dearly, but the completion of these very words shows that she will sustain me forever more.

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INTRODUCTION

COMIN' AND GOIN' IN COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

The real estate advertisements and planning documents that portray Columbia Heights are correct: the area is a vibrant, multicultural neighborhood. On a given day, the streets are filled with residents, employees, and people from outside the neighborhood moving through its recently transformed city streets.

At the new Park Triangle plaza, above a colorful mosaic on the ground, people rush by while some sit on one of the new benches to take in the sights. A group of black teens practice skateboard tricks on the lower stone walls. In the summer, Latino boys and girls run through the spray fountains recently installed amidst the mosaic. Parents hold grocery bags and grocery carts, some enjoying a bag of mango slices an unofficial Latina street vendor sells out of a large blue cooler on the corner.

Commerce is alive here, but not just because of the massive retail destinations that have come, lighting up the night sky like a miniature Times Square. Below the hulking signs for the Target, Best Buy, Staples, and Marshalls there are smaller card tables set up along the street. Middle-aged black men sell essential oils, flowers around holidays, paintings, and even light up bracelets and charms not uncommon at stadium events.

The farmers market brings even more crowds out in the spring, summer, and fall. This market is home to over a dozen booths for local farms in Maryland and Virginia. It is an outgrowth of a Columbia Heights community market started in 2000 as a way to bridge divides among long-term residents of color, incoming white residents, and the

increasing Central and Latin American immigrant population. Looking around, it seems as though divisions have not been magically healed.



Figure 2. Columbia Heights sidewalk mosaic, 14th Street and Irving Street, NW
Photo by the author.

Most of the patrons are white, dressed in brand name performance fleece or fitted jeans. Young professional men and women hold hands and sample breads and cheeses, sometimes bickering and sometimes speaking in baby talk to each other or small children

in strollers. You can overhear a queer couple, decked in sunglasses and fitted tee-shirts, retell wild stories from the night before. Amongst the majority of white middle and upper-middle class twenty- and thirty-somethings, there are a few black and Latino people buying produce. The prices are often three times as much as the sales at the Giant supermarket across the street. The recent shift to accept food assistance subsidies has not led to a flood of low-income residents at the farmer's market that has become a peaceful ritual for many newcomers.

The demographic diversity rooted in Columbia Heights becomes all the more apparent as you leave the bustle of the neighborhood's center, clustered around a Metro station, large chain retail, a smattering of independently owned high-end gastropubs, a wine shop, a Starbucks, and a spa. To the north, the handful of bars frequented by young, white people are outnumbered by dozens of Latino/a-owned tacquerias, bakeries, and grocers. There are minority-owned dry cleaners, laundromats, and hair salons, some that specifically cater to black residents and others frequented by Latina/o residents.

To the south there are several clusters of low-rise and a few high-rise low-income housing complexes. Despite drug and gang activity and almost constant police surveillance, there are clusters of residents laughing and talking outside doorways and against fences. Depending on the street, there is a mix of early 20th century row houses occupied by generations of black Washingtonians and row houses completely rehabbed and cloaked in luxury: hard wood floors, granite countertops, stainless steel appliances.

There are dog parks filled with white people and parks filled with black people. There are people who live in Columbia Heights and people visiting from other parts of D.C, Maryland, and Virginia. There are homeless people sleeping on benches and drug

dealers on street corners and the few parks that they don't lock up at night. On the ground, these people are equally invested in using the spaces of Columbia Heights, but the investment that shapes these spaces is not so equal.

White gay male partners, college students of various racial and ethnic identifications, Vietnamese, Laotian, Ethiopian, and Korean mothers with small children, multigenerational immigrant and black families: all of these people are seen on stoops, on streets, and in stores. Sometimes they talk with one another. Often black men and women shout to other neighbors. A group of local Latina mothers will chat on the way to the supermarket. A group of young white people will congregate and laugh on their way to a bar. There is definitely “comin’ and goin’” as announced on one sidewalk mural that borrows a phrase uttered during a community planning meeting five years ago. Despite the race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class-based lines that determine who engages with whom, there is constant proximity and interaction. As these incomplete but representative snapshots illustrate, demographic diversity is not akin to multicultural harmony, just as segregated socialization is not akin to completely separate and homogenous spaces.

Though Columbia Heights has no officially defined boundaries, it is an unofficial neighborhood in the Northwest quadrant of Washington D.C. roughly six blocks east to west and roughly twenty blocks north to south. Initially outside the city limits until the 1871 D.C. Organic Act extended Washington city's boundaries, this neighborhood on the hill was a refuge to wealthy politicians and generals. It was also home to a private university, Columbia College, which moved downtown and became George Washington University by 1912. Throughout the early 20th century it was trolley car enclave home to

well-to-do citizens working in the city. By midcentury, however, it became home to an increasing number of middle- and working-class African Americans.

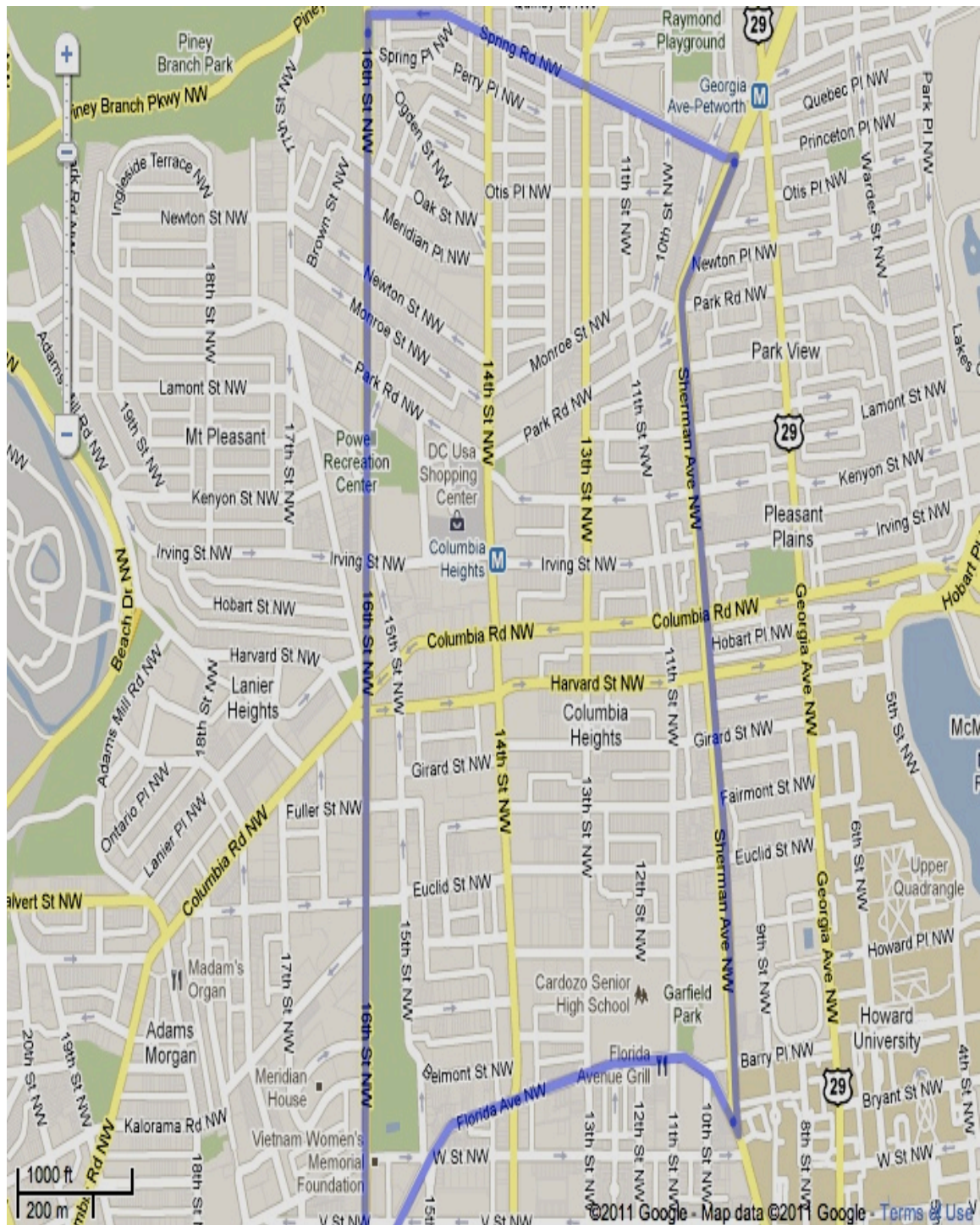


Figure 1.1. Map of Columbia Heights

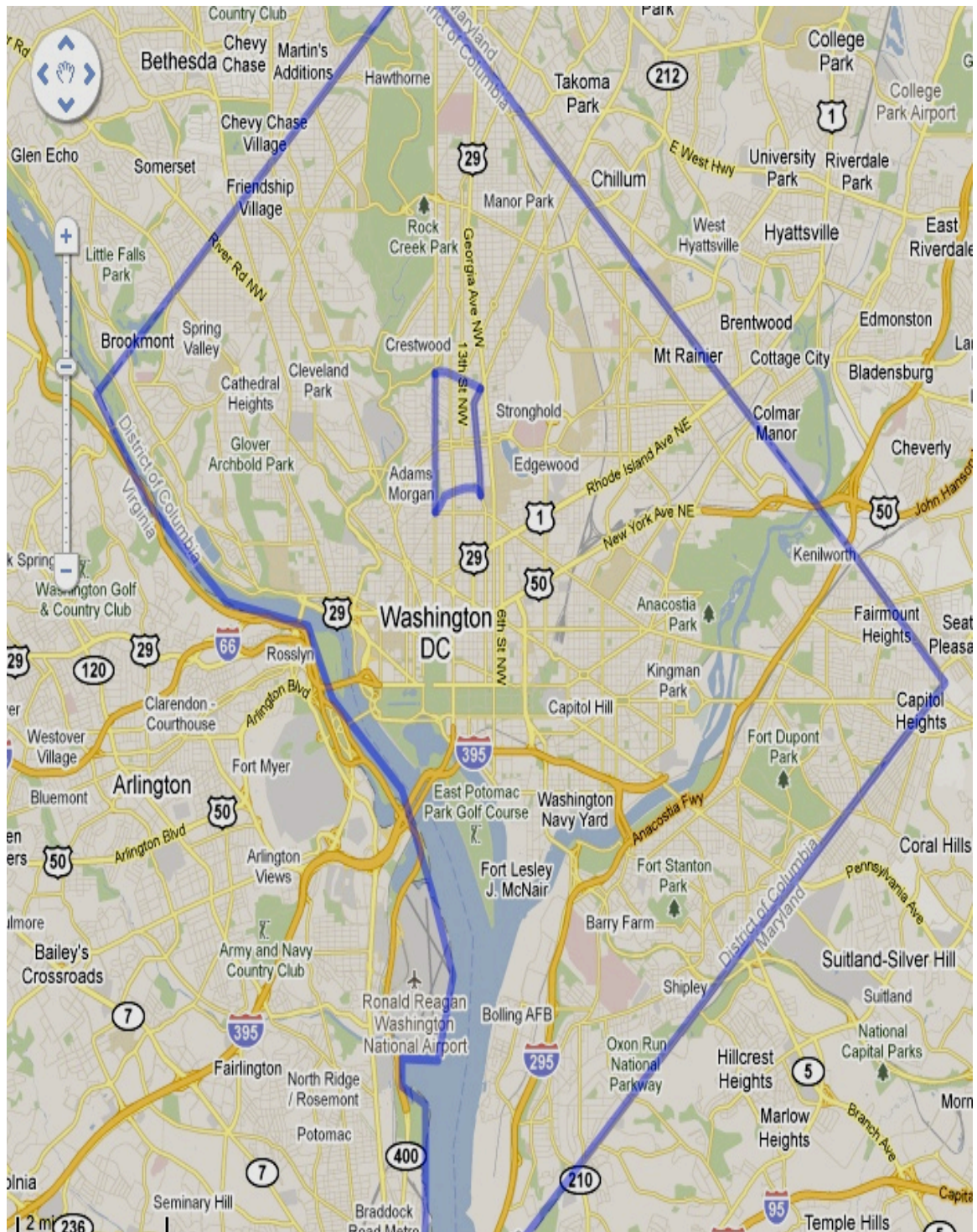


Figure 1.2. Map of Columbia Heights highlighted within larger map of Washington, D.C.

Adjacent to the “gold coast” of 16th Street’s wealthy African Americans, Columbia Heights was a residential and retail destination for black Washington. As whites moved out of the neighborhood and the city began investing money in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. suburbs, residents of Columbia Heights faced declining city services and fewer employment opportunities. After the civil uprisings of 1968, destroyed businesses were slow to rebound if at all. The continued shift away from federal and local investment in urban development, often along lines of race and class, continued to drain residents’ opportunity and resources. Rising drug and gang activity led to increased incidents of violence without a concomitant rise in safety and community development initiatives.

This dissertation is primarily focused on the decades in which Columbia Heights began to change again. The delayed but imminent Metrorail subway station and the subsequent population increase of mostly white, middle-class property owners changed the direction of Columbia Heights. City agencies charged with development moved focus from low-income property maintenance to imagine Columbia Heights as a destination for middle and upper-middle-class (mostly white) residents and their much-needed tax revenue. Low-income residents were still a part of the equation but, unlike ideal newcomers, they did not have the positive association of being part of the solution.

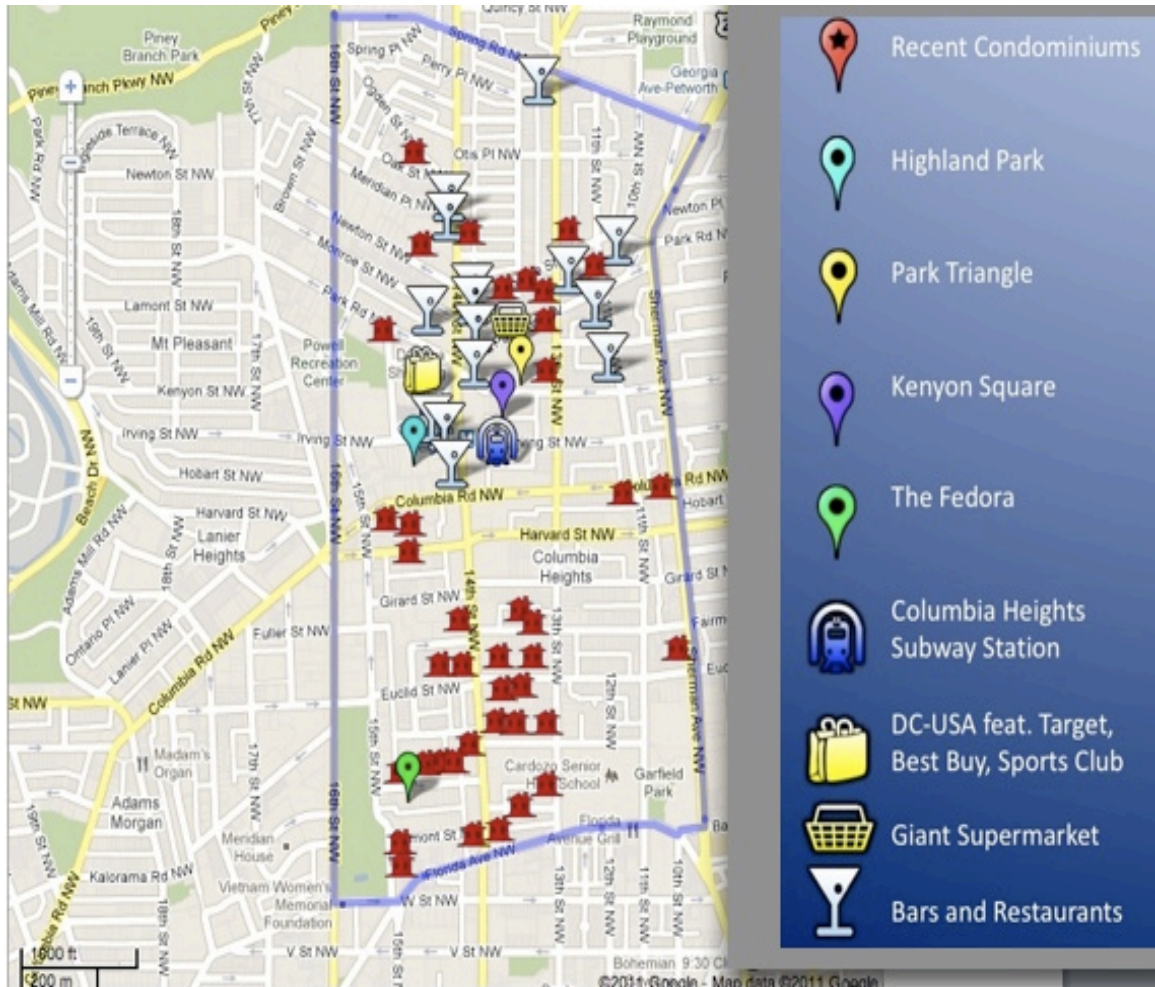


Figure 3. Map of recent development in Columbia Heights with new buildings discussed in Chapter 3 highlighted.

Columbia Heights is an example of both large and small-scale approaches to channeling investment back into a particular neighborhood. Government funded transportation projects led to individuals and realtors investing. Both those events led to the city government offering millions in tax breaks to entice big box stores and high end condo and entertainment developers. Now, Columbia Heights is a mix of longtime residents and newcomers. The amenities have radically changed the population and tax revenue of the area. The question, however, is who is this redevelopment benefitting?

The price for housing stock once within reach for low-income residents has skyrocketed. With every new condo building there is less room for affordable housing. With every new \$15 cocktail bar, there is one less commercial space to cater to *all* residents of the neighborhood.

And so, we see the anatomy of Columbia Heights' big disconnect. The diversity of the street, of the real estate ads, of the planning documents, belie the unequal way certain residents are treated. The working-class black and Latino/a faces that make Columbia Heights seem like a great equalizing space have disproportionately less capital, education, and freedom from policing.

This dissertation tries to make sense of some of the relationships highlighted here. Through ethnographic conversations with long-term residents and newcomers with various racial, ethnic, sexual, and class identification, I analyze how people conceptualize difference and development. I juxtapose these narratives with official representations in planning documents and real estate marketing to give a fuller picture of what *really* happened/is happening in Columbia Heights. I also use interviews with residents to examine the day-to-day interactions between diverse residents to understand how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class affect people's relationship with space and to each other. My discussion of planning documents, real estate marketing, and the Columbia Heights listserv- an in-between site of resident conversation and archived representations- shows how visual and textual rhetoric promote and devalue particular kinds of diversity.

As I think back to the crowded streets of Columbia Heights, my home for the last five years, I understand that the first thing that guides this project is my investment in equality for all Columbia Heights residents. My overriding *methodological* investment

that guides this project is my belief that representations matter. They affect the material environment: who gets what and who belongs where.

Beyond that, I suggest ways to continue the destabilization of an uneven development process and the discourse that supports it. These suggestions are rooted in the ideas my respondents shared with me, ranging from policy solutions to better neighbor-to-neighbor interaction. As my opening descriptions illustrate, this dissertation is but one voice in the alternately harmonious and cacophonous chorus that shapes Columbia Heights. The conversation has been carried on for decades and will continue long after this project enters the world, but I hope that it helps the comin' and goin' flow a little more evenly.

CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING THE DISCOURSE OF DIFFERENCE: CHARTING THE PROJECT'S INFLUENCES, CONTEXT, AND METHODS

In the changing landscape of Columbia Heights, ideas about race, sexuality, and class do not just supplement the political and economic actions that order the built environment. The discourses of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class actively shape how the landscape shifts. Focusing on Columbia Heights- a demographically diverse neighborhood in Washington D.C. that has experienced substantial change in the last half century- I explore how racial, ethnic, sexual, and class diversity is discussed, disputed, and deployed on various individual, collective and institutional levels. Two main questions override this research project. How is urban diversity conceptualized and what kinds of difference are valued, marginalized, and policed? How has diversity been used to promote inequitable development and how can a commitment to diversity translate to strategies for residents and planners to create a more democratic space?

My argument is two-fold. I argue that representations of a space affect its materiality. In other words, discourse about a space causes changes in the built environment. Secondly, I argue that the discourse that shapes Columbia Heights often does so by deploying a specific ideology of “diversity” and racial, ethnic, sexual, and class difference. I am primarily interested in exploring the disconnect between a rhetorical commitment to diversity in planning approaches and the everyday reality of residents. Specifically, I compare representations with the experience of white, black, Latina/o, and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer residents of varying class backgrounds. This discourse has changed over time but despite the shifts, these representations have

continually supported development that has disproportionately denied resources to low-income residents of color.

This dissertation examines different “sites” that produce discourse to chart the rise of neoliberal development, a process that uses distorted representations of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class to forward publically-sponsored private development favoring middle and upper-middle class (often white) residents at the expense of low-income residents of color. I argue that, rather than being erased from the narrative to make way for upward distribution, rhetorical commitment to racial, ethnic, sexual and- to a lesser extent- class diversity is integral to selling the process.

It also includes ethnographic analysis of residents of Columbia Heights, illustrating how dominant ideology is reinforced and challenged. Despite my critical approach to rhetorics of diversity, I am invested in the coalitions, connections, and networks demographically diverse urban built environments can potentially offer. My critique is therefore combined with a discussion of how residents sometimes reject the rhetoric of commodifiable diversity and fight against uneven development. I examine formal organizations that lobby for equitable development in addition to exploring the importance of less formal forms of resistance such as speaking the truth of how development went down in meetings, church halls, and front stoops. Drawing from this counter-discourse, I suggest what went wrong and how development projects can lead to a space that benefits all residents more equally.

This dissertation focuses mainly on changes in Columbia Heights from 1968 to the present day. Despite that periodization, this dissertation is non-linear. Instead, it is organized around the different “sites” of discourse. Though the discourse generated has

changed over time, the project is organized around the thematic trends in representations of Columbia Heights rather than the chronological progression of development. I have chosen this organizational technique to highlight the distinct role each “site” plays in shaping development in Columbia Heights. The representations produced in planning documents, real estate marketing, and listservs circulate amongst each other, but each site in each era produces a narrative unique to its medium.

Similarly, the separation of my ethnographic analysis honors the unique experience different groups have had. Longtime residents have a different perspective than newcomers. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or queer residents also have a unique social location and orientation to the neighborhood. Race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class identifications mix and mingle within my three groupings and each grouping has overlapping perspectives on some issues. I separate my analysis by site and by resident group, though, precisely to better understand the unique interplay between representations and the different kinds of residents that produce and consume them.

After a brief review of my theoretical grounding, scholarship that has informed this study, and a discussion of my methodology, I present a history of planning and development in Washington, D.C. and Columbia Heights specifically. After grounding the project, each chapter considers a different discursive site that represents difference in Columbia Heights. First, I examine planning documents, comparing these official representations with the experiences of longtime residents. I chart three different eras with divergent representations of race, ethnicity, and class: the erasure of working-class African American Washingtonians in the 1950s and early 1960s, the appropriation of

social justice and black power rhetoric in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and the rhetoric of neoliberal multiculturalism in the 1990s and 2000s.

I then analyze real estate marketing from the 2000s and juxtapose the ideology in the ads with the experiences of incoming middle and upper-middle class residents. The next chapter charts the use of gay-led gentrification narratives in these recent, state-sponsored development projects. I explore how LGBTQ residents- mostly newcomers- conceptualize Columbia Heights and “gayborhoods” generally. The final site I analyze moves to a slightly different “site,” that of the Columbia Heights listserv. I illustrate how incoming white residents in the online “community” of Columbia Heights deployed ideas about race, class, and belonging to increase their power in the neighborhood.

Drawing the Parameter: Notes on a Theoretical Framework

This dissertation is an examination of power: who has it and how representations and discourse influence it. Columbia Heights, like many urban areas, has been the site of multiple power struggles over time. On one level, power is bestowed upon those with the most material capital. Private developers have wielded tremendous influence in how Columbia Heights was and is developed. The federal and local government has increasingly augmented that power.

Individual residents are also embroiled in power relations, guided by the large-scale processes supported by public and private institutions. Middle and upper middle-class residents have benefitted disproportionately from development in Columbia Heights. Racial and ethnic hierarchies have also reinforced unequal power dynamics. Though middle and upper-middle class people of color do benefit from recent

development, white residents have been especially privileged in the “new,” more upscale Columbia Heights. Sexuality has shaped power relations as well, with gay-led gentrification narratives used to upscale the neighborhood and simultaneously discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer residents. Power is often situational and dependent on how difference intersects. There is no way to finitely map how difference shapes power, but this dissertation begins to unpack that process.

A discussion of power must also include a discussion of how power relations are shaped. This has led me to focus on representations. As many cultural studies scholars, from Stuart Hall to Patricia Hill Collins have argued, images matter. Analyzing how these representations order power structures in our culture is a deadly serious matter.¹ Cultural constructions shape power relations.

I argue that representations also order physical space. Drawing from John Dorst’s study of Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania, I view Columbia Heights as a site of inquiry that is “a kind of library, or better, an apparatus that exists for and through the management of texts.”² Columbia Heights the space is inextricable from its representations. One needs only to look at the process of real estate development to understand how representation and space connect. Neighborhoods live or die by how they are valued by residents, developers, and the state. Value is often defined by the amount of resources a particular space has: high quality housing stock, low crime rates, grocery stores, transportation, parking, quality sanitation and utility service, etc.

Value is also rooted in more abstract perceptions. Firstly, I argue that value is often determined by representations of the neighborhood: is it construed as safe, “up and coming,” hip, dangerous, dirty, a black neighborhood, a gay enclave, a yuppie

neighborhood, etc.? Secondly, these representations directly affect the resources a neighborhood gets. Development, policing, and city services are much more likely to arrive if the neighborhood is construed as a worthy space and a hot destination, especially for people with higher incomes.

I argue that dominant representations map the area in a particular way, assigning value to particular residents, buildings, and spaces. The ideological maps of Columbia Heights often come out of narratives that define Columbia Heights as a hip, multicultural neighborhood perfect for middle and upper-middle-class residents. These narratives create a logic of gentrification in which development that disproportionately serves incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents is figured as the best option for *all* residents of Columbia Heights.³

The logic that orders ideas about the neighborhood is uniquely tied to the material. In real estate development, the line between the material and symbolic is collapsed. The practice of real estate speculation, one of the main forces of gentrification, is built on deriving material wealth from ideas about what a neighborhood *could* be. Speculative investment is so profitable and popular because it requires a gamble. Neil Smith defines this process as the “rent gap” hypothesis. The rent gap is the margin between a site’s current value and the value it *could* have. Profit relies on the formula that future profits yielded from the “rehabbed” property will far outweigh the cost of rehabilitating it.⁴ In other words, buy low sell high. But the process of shifting something from low to high does not just involve physical construction. It requires the construction of the sites’ increased cultural and ideological worth. Speculators invest in what they see as a potential future. Literal monetary investment is made because of a perception of a

space. Even material indicators such as current amenities and property values were at one time built and calculated based on *perceptions* of what a neighborhood was and what it could become.

Especially in an era of dwindling public funds for public development, local and federal governments have tried to encourage private investment in previously disinvested neighborhoods. Cities such as Washington, D.C. have protections against rising housing prices for low-income residents but these protections are often minimal and ineffective. Despite these provisions, governments largely encourage speculation because it translates into development and rising tax revenue from the higher earners who move into the neighborhood.

In short, developers, the government, and individual investors all rely on representations of a neighborhood to direct their money and physical construction in specific ways. It is in all their best interests to construct and reproduce a representation of Columbia Heights as somewhere ideal for investment. The ideal place for commercial and residential investment is somewhere that houses middle and upper-middle-class consumers ready and able to spend money. It is a place where racial, ethnic, and class difference is non-threatening to middle and upper-middle-class potential residents and lends to a hip, urban authenticity. It is a place where middle and upper-middle-class feel safe, with few vestiges of crime and the low-income residents of color associated with that crime.

This dissertation charts how rhetorics of diversity are deployed in these ideological maps of Columbia Heights. The contemporary dominant narrative of Columbia Heights fuels uneven development, but like all ideology it is continually

contested. Not all residents, planners, or investors take the logics of gentrification as the absolute truth. There are fissures in the dominant ideology and efforts to dismantle and replace it with maps that value residents erased and policed because of their racial, ethnic, sexual, or class status.

“Diversity” is a term with multivalent meanings, but generally I make the distinction between an engagement with race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and other markers of difference that includes a discussion of value *and* inequality and what Jane Ward dubs “diversity politics.” Ward defines diversity politics as the institutional deflection “away from one or more forms of inequality by promoting cross-cultural understanding and the celebration of multiple differences.”⁵ Demographic diversity is a descriptive term whereas the rhetoric and discourse of diversity refer to the ideological constructions that frame diversity as a concept devoid of systemic oppression. Furthermore, throughout the dissertation I use the term “difference” to describe race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. My use of the word “difference” is meant to acknowledge the power relations built into conceptualizing “other” or “different” identifications and embodiments.

My discussions of “discourse” are rooted in a Foucauldian understanding of the word. In other words, the various statements about Columbia Heights and about “diversity” generally order the political economy of the area. Foucault argues that discourse is “not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.”⁶ Difference is organized within Columbia Heights through advertising, planning rhetoric, legal writing, comments online, at meetings, and on the street. The logics of

difference and space formed in those moments are forwarded as an objective “truth,” eliding the fact that the logics are socially constructed. Truth, as Foucault argues, is circularly linked to systems of power, each sustaining one another.⁷ In the case of discourse surrounding diversity and Columbia Heights, the “truth” produced frames low-income residents of color as invisible and/or unworthy of resources. Racial, ethnic, sexual, and even class Otherness is valued, but value and power are distinct.⁸ Those that embody that valuable difference cannot so readily cash in. Starving Black artists may attract people to the neighborhood, but those artists cannot afford to buy the condos they were used to sell.

Though this dissertation charts the way that dominant discourses silence and erase certain residents, it also examines how some residents challenge the “truth.” Following Foucault and later theorists such as Judith Butler, I treat the hegemonic truths produced by discourse to be inherently unstable. Butler’s work on the destabilization of gender and sex has influenced my own exploration of the potential in exploiting what she calls the “instability of all discursive fixing.”⁹ Though power will always be reproduced in discourse, the terms of who has that power is always subject to change. The optimism that runs through my critique of the thorough inequity facing some Columbia Heights residents rests on the hope that counter-discursive moves among residents can effect material changes.

The statements and definitions that order difference in Columbia Heights are not all created equal. The discourse of diversity is formed and reformed at many different literal and abstract “sites.” This study primarily focuses on four distinct but related components of discourse: residents, online discussion, city officials, and marketing on

behalf of developers and real estate firms.¹⁰ All are collated in the discursive formations that order Columbia Heights, but each actor and/or venue has different levels of influence.¹¹

Residents' statements about the diversity and the neighborhood order the landscape and affect how they and their neighbors move through space. This discourse forms what places are safe, unsafe, cool, "sketchy," etc. This has a profound affect on what spaces are economically viable and worthy of city services like police details and trash pickup. Residents' physical presence and buying power, however, is in many ways less powerful than the huge amount of capital developers have. Especially in the 21st century when the state relies on private developers to "save" entire neighborhoods, developers create representations of Columbia Heights in marketing and PR materials that project what the neighborhood should be like in the future. The discourse of private development is draped on billboards and storefronts, splashed across newspaper pages, and fed to reporters interested in creating influential feature stories about multicultural, "up and coming" areas.

Finally, government officials like those in the Redevelopment Land Agency, D.C. Office of Zoning, and the D.C. Office of Planning order the neighborhood by allowing particular kinds of development. They are closely tied to lawmakers and law enforcers, constructing what and who is allowed in the neighborhood. These agencies also construct a particular narrative about Columbia Heights in order to entice private developers. They shape Columbia Heights by using enormous amounts of capital in the form of tax breaks and bond issuance to ensure particular kinds of development. Governmental actors' power is augmented because of their respectability as an "official" body charged with

fostering the well being of residents. All of these “sites” of discourse are also sites of struggle. As Louis Althusser’s work on Ideological State Apparatuses has illustrated, institutions that reproduce the logic of capitalism do not go unchallenged.¹² Throughout this dissertation, these issues of power, influence, and resistance to dominant ideology will be injected into close analyses of plans, advertisements, list serves, and conversation.

Difference is always present in the urban built environment, whether it is the conceptualization of racial/ethnic/sexual “enclaves,” the role of LGBQ people as “urban pioneers” in processes of gentrification, or the marketability of urban diversity for incoming residents and businesses. Difference, identity, and space are always embroiled within shifting power relations, i.e. who has access and control of what resources, who belongs where, and who feels safe in particular spaces. I employ an intersectional approach, articulating not only how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class function in the built environment, but how they function in relation to one another.¹³

The rhetoric of diversity in Columbia Heights often flattens difference into a one-dimensional, fixed identity. This study explores the complexity of intersecting markers of difference. The cultural landscape of Columbia Heights does not contain finite battles between white and black residents. It is not simply a war of territory between gay gentrifiers and working class residents. Intra-racial conflict arises among low-income and middle-class black residents. LGBQ residents of color can have a much different understanding of the narrative of gay-led gentrification. Latina/o concerns about crime can target other residents of color and reaffirm entrenched racisms. White women buying property in the neighborhood conceptualize their experience as distinct from the heteronormative processes of familial wealth acquisition. While suggestive arguments

can be drawn about how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class are conceptualized, there can be no definitive claims about how “white newcomers” or “longtime residents of color” navigate the neighborhood.

As numerous scholars of race, gender, and sexuality- from Howard Omi and David Winant to Stuart Hall to Judith Butler- argue, the identities associated with markers of difference discussed in this dissertation are powerfully felt by residents but are ultimately socially constructed fictions.¹⁴ Not only is there no solitary experience among each person who identifies as black, white, lesbian, middle-class, et al., there is no finite identity behind these markers of difference. For instance, throughout this dissertation I use the designations “upper-middle-class,” “middle-class,” “working-class,” and “low-income” as defined by the Gilbert-Kahl scale.¹⁵ Despite, however, the fairly strict definitions of class, research, including my own, shows that people often identify with a class status that does not match their income level.¹⁶ Though I respect the identifications my respondents claim, I understand that the act of fashioning a particular identity is itself a discursive creation. Fixed identities are further reinforced through the production and presentation of difference in the texts that present Columbia Heights. Race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class are inscripted and those- albeit unstable- identity representations shape the landscape.

Race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class have all at one point or another been an especially integral part of Columbia Heights, both as identities that move through the neighborhood and as markers that have ordered power in the neighborhood. Once an exclusive white, middle-class enclave outside the bounds of Washington, D.C., the area became a middle-class African-American neighborhood in the mid 20th century. In the

last fifty years it has been home to working-class and low-income African Americans, with increasingly populous networks of Latina/o, African, and white residents.

As the demographics of the neighborhood have changed in addition to larger cultural and economic shifts, so too have the discourses of difference. Dominant discourse has shifted from conceptualizing Washington D.C. as the “white” city symbolic of the nation in the 1950s to a “chocolate city” on the forefront of civil rights and black power movements in the 1960s and 70s to a city upscaling with African Americans at the helm in the 1980s to an “inclusive city” in the 1990s and beyond, with room for all of its diverse residents, privileged and marginalized alike.

Ideas about contemporary diversity are part of a larger neoliberal framework characterized by token multiculturalism used to obscure upward distribution of resources that relies on systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism to succeed. I argue that the dominant narrative of difference in the last 25 years has relied on a “celebration” framework that allows for the inclusion of certain kinds of difference in the popular imaginary. People of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people, working-class people and other marginalized groups have been represented with growing frequency.

The kinds of difference allowed in this new framework are limited. The most important precondition of increased visibility is that representations of difference must exist without a discussion of continued systemic inequality. Black faces are flaunted on luxury condo buildings, but black residents struggling for affordable housing are to be ignored or pushed out once the “transitional” neighborhood has transitioned. Representation of difference must not deviate too far from the normative and must not call into question current power structures, unless these representations are being used in

a rhetoric of social justice that covers over neglect, homelessness, unemployment, poor nutrition, violence and other symptoms of inequality are off limits.

Representation of difference in Columbia Heights must be contextualized within the larger engagement with difference under neoliberalism. Certain kinds of diversity are valued as a cultural, political, and economic asset. Corporate culture strives to foster a diverse workforce under the assumption that inclusion and diversity of experience leads to a desirable workplace for talented employees that, in turn, leads to innovation.¹⁷ The latter qualities translate to competitiveness and profit in the globalized economy. Indians are brought to the U.S. for engineering projects. Growing niche markets for African Americans, Latina/os, LGBT and other consumers target representations of difference to generate untapped profit. Bud Light advertises in gay periodicals and Hallmark starts an “Ebony” line of greeting cards. Rounding out a film or television show with a black or gay secondary character shows production companies’ progressive edge and woos viewers who are not used to seeing themselves on the screen. A gay couple is part of the traditional familial sitcom narrative in ABC’s *Modern Family*. Regina King stars alongside Sandra Bullock as a sassy sidekick in *Miss Congeniality*.

Redressing longstanding absences and stereotypical representations in mainstream media, these companies lure people of color and/or LGBT people with a message of equality, gaining loyal consumers in the process. Halle Berry, Denzel Washington, Sidney Poitier are all honored at the Academy Awards.¹⁸ In the film *Sex and the City 2*, a gay sidekick gets married to his boyfriend implying an endorsement of same sex marriage. These examples illustrate how diversity has not only been allowed within the

neoliberal economy, it has been a vital component to promoting the contemporary economy.

The neoliberal economy also includes urban development. I define neoliberal development as the process of development that increasingly dismantles the social welfare state in favor of public sponsorship of private, for-profit development. As Arlene Davila has noted in her study of East Harlem, neoliberal development directs state resources away from welfare and public housing programs and into private development that favors the middle-class and a consumption ethos.¹⁹

This shift comes alongside a changing urban landscape. As urban studies scholars such as Saskia Sassen and Peter Marcuse have documented, urban areas have shifted along with a shift in the economy. The relocation and declination of manufacturing and semi-skilled work in the city and a concomitant rise in an urban-centered professional and management-class has led to the upscaling of the city center.²⁰ Simultaneously, the replacement of semi-skilled labor with service industry work has lowered the wages of working-class residents and threatened their ability to keep up with the astronomical rise in urban real estate.

In addition to changing processes of production, housing in the city has long been structured around lending and development practices that have discriminated against the working class and/or people of color. After decades of racist, classist state-sponsored housing and employment discrimination and disinvestment, reinvestment became a priority. Tempered by an investment in a postindustrial knowledge economy built on the backs of low-wage service laborers, this reinvestment strategy promoted upscale development under the auspices of universally beneficial reinvestment for all residents.

Development in Columbia Heights over the last 40 years is representative of the dismantling of public welfare that provides housing, food, monetary, and other assistance for low-income people.²¹ In its place, the state has increasingly given assistance to private corporations to develop urban areas. Pointing to the alleged effectiveness of the private spheres' ability to rebuild disinvested areas and bring tax revenue back to these areas, the state has fashioned upscale development as a socially just replacement for ineffective public assistance programs. The state requires a small amount of this private development to serve low-income residents, as seen in inclusionary zoning laws that require 20% of units in a new building to be for low-income residents.

The packaging of this process, in marketing campaigns, mayoral speeches, and other promotional materials, hinges on rhetoric that validates demographically diverse urban spaces. Demographic difference is not only tolerated in the process, it is integral to its success. In an area such as Columbia Heights, selling the inequitable landscape of the neoliberal city *requires* an investment in diversity. The concentration of residents of color and/or low-income residents in Columbia Heights needs to be addressed for upward redistribution to operate without widespread critique. Blatant displacement and marginalization would go against the dominant neoliberal logic of the inclusive, innovative post-industrial city. Instead, the process runs more smoothly when the lingering unease regarding displacement and inequitable distribution of resources is solved through a narrative that embraces Columbia Heights' diversity. The narrative of diverse Columbia Heights, deployed by developers, marketers, planning officials, and residents alike, allows for the less conspicuous process of upward distribution in the form

of publically-funded, private development for majority middle and upper-middle-class residents.

Counter discursive moves, however, are widespread among residents. I define counter-discursive moves broadly as speech and acts that present a narrative that illustrates what's really going on in Columbia Heights. When inequality is recognized and articulated, the dominant narratives that justify and perpetuate uneven development are destabilized. These narratives rely on the erasure of inequality. Under neoliberalism, race, ethnicity, and sexuality are rhetorically separated from the economic structure that is built on hierarchies of difference. Acknowledging the links between difference and the political economy threatens the sale of that narrative.

Acknowledgment, however, is only a first step. Pinpointing racism, heterosexism, and classism is a necessary, but not final step to redress inequality. As Sara Ahmed argues in her discussion of universities' diversity statements, decrying racism and committing to anti-racism can be a "nonperformative" speech act. Publishing the critique may be used as a false endpoint, taking the place of actual anti-racist action such as changed hiring policies and recruitment of students of color. Texts are "not finished as forms of action, and what they do depends on how they are "taken up."²²

These nonperformatives can be commodified. The representation of the ideal gentrifier is often a middle or upper-middle-class resident who has progressive values. Espousing distaste for racism, classism, and gentrification itself can thus perpetuate the process of upscale development rather than challenging it. As Christopher Mele and Richard Lloyd illustrate in their studies of the Lower East Side in New York City and Wicker Park in Chicago respectively, political activism, even in the form of anti-

gentrification efforts, can be included in selling a neighborhood as a destination for progressive-minded people with enough money to afford the rising rents.²³

In order to remap the neighborhood, a new understanding of how difference and development operate is key. After acknowledging the continuing state-sponsored discrimination and disinvestment the government has visited upon working-class and low-income residents, something still has to be done to reverse it. As I argue in my analysis of planning documents, this translates into finding policy solutions to mobilize the social justice rhetoric they have used for much of the mid to late 20th century. Though this dissertation is primarily concerned with charting how discourse has been used to justify and perpetuate uneven development, I also explore how this discourse is continuously contested.

Some residents engage with difference in ways that highlight rather than obscure continued marginalization. Even those that do not explicitly critique the neoliberal rhetoric of diversity often express ambivalence about upscale development and gentrification, creating fissures in the dominant ideology. The existence of these strands of counter-discourse, from the organized responses of community organizations to the individual reflections of residents, offers insight into how difference can be engaged in ways that promote equity.

Contesting the dominant neoliberal discourse is not always an empty nonperformative. It can also be the catalyst for political and economic change. My ethnography illustrates that many residents do not fully buy into these narratives. Those moments show that residents “know the score” and are not always persuaded by the rhetoric of diversity. There is a politics in knowing, especially given the push to erase

the marginalization that orders development. Testifying about inequality and demanding resources, in official meetings and to neighbors (including neighbors writing dissertations) allow residents to assert their agency as people who will not be ignored, policed, or displaced.

Residents' wariness about recent development, far from being an empty acknowledgement, has historically led to collective action, from creating development organizations challenging city planners to creating tenant and neighborhood associations that provide support the city has not provided, to disrupting the comfort of exclusive spaces meant for newcomers by being vocally black, queer, and angry.

For each individual resident, planner, and developer there is a constellation of beliefs, intent, action, and investment. Acknowledging inequality can exist alongside a literal investment in upscale development. My intent is not to classify what actors are responsible or which residents care the most. While I do argue that acknowledgement is an important step on the way to fighting inequitable distribution of resources, it is beyond the scope of this project to elucidate the intricate links between intent and action. What I do illustrate is that these incongruent relationships can exist and have to be accounted for in a discussion of how representation and discourse shape power relations in Columbia Heights.

This project examines the neoliberal rhetoric of diversity and juxtaposes it with a commitment to social justice. I understand the end goal of "social justice" to mean the equitable rights and resources to all people. Obtaining that equity includes fostering processes that redress past and contemporary oppression. Though social justice is linked to the idea of "rights," I delineate my own use of the word and some of the traditional

rights discourses that reinforce an inherently unequal system. Under Liberalism (and neoliberalism), the granting of rights requires marginalized people to “buy in” without restructuring endemic problems in the system. Shane Phelan’s work on the exclusionary nature of citizenship has informed my own understanding of rights.²⁴ More than expanding access to the current order, social justice demands that systems be reordered to provide all people with cultural, political, and economic equity.

From my textual and ethnographic analysis, I locate two possible interventions that work to dismantle the effects of neoliberal development. The first is a perhaps obvious critique of the governmental support of inequitable private development. The most direct route to equitable urban spaces is building a social welfare state that ensures the needs of all residents are being met. This means channeling public resources into bolstering affordable housing, food and monetary assistance programs, job creation, and living wages. It means not solely relying on non-governmental nonprofit and for-profit companies and charities to provide for people.²⁵ It means shifting state intervention in the “free market” from sponsoring discrimination to requiring private entities to substantively provide for all people. Federal and local governments must stop endorsing the myth of block by block gentrification as an effective and just strategy. They must first acknowledge their role in shaping redevelopment and transform their role to foster equitable development. This intervention is not novel, but in a neoliberal climate where obfuscation is a vital tool, restating this critique remains necessary.

The second intervention I offer revolves around the idea of contact among residents. Drawing from Jane Jacobs, Clifford Geertz, Samuel Delany, Donna Haraway and other scholars, I argue that contact among people of varying social locations offers

moments that work against the dominant discourse of neoliberal diversity. Contact exposes power relations and has the potential, alongside larger-scale approaches to reform the state, to work against inequitable development and the rhetoric that supports it.

Jane Jacobs first theorized the role “contact” plays in the creation of healthy urban environments. She argued that most of this ephemeral contact “is ostensibly utterly trivial but the sum is not trivial at all. The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level... is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighborhood need.”²⁶ For Jacobs, contact works partially because it is not controlled and it does not require extraordinary effort on the part of city residents who often enjoy the relative anonymity of city life. Samuel Delany expands on Jacobs’ formulation of contact in his paean for the lost sexual culture of Times Square. Though speaking primarily about sexual contact, he argues that all forms of interclass contact form the basis for a democratic city. These moments destabilize hierarchies of difference, however momentarily.²⁷

Jacobs and Delany’s definitions of contact have greatly influenced my own; however, I argue both are overly optimistic about moments of contact. Jacobs’ embrace of contact exists alongside classist, racist, and homophobic claims about deviant city dwellers. These marginalized people are not figured in to her idealized web of contact. Delany explicitly advocates for contact between races and classes, however his investment in contact is also idealized. He is overly concerned with fostering “pleasantness,” an emotion that potentially silences the rightful tension between people with differential power.²⁸ It is easier to laud contact when you are the middle-class person

wanting to reach out to the working class passerby. Delany's theory offers an important intervention for middle-class people to buck a trend towards sanitized, homogenous spaces. He acknowledges that contact is not a solution for hierarchies of difference; however, even with this caveat he does not fully theorize the role power has in these interactions.

Mary Pratt's theorization of the colonial "contact zone" offers a helpful definition of contact that foregrounds power without robbing contact of its productive possibilities. For Pratt, "a 'contact' perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other... It treats the relations... in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power."²⁹ In other words, differential power is a given, but this power relation does not exclude the possibility for contact that destabilizes traditional hierarchies.

Donna Haraway uses Pratt's formulation in her discussion of interspecies contact. Haraway theorizes moments of play between predator and prey as a moment in which power dynamics are subverted and shifted around.³⁰ For instance, two animals that normally share a predatory relationship will flip the script in moments of play, destabilizing the hierarchy while doing so. While a comparison of interspecies contact and human-to-human contact is inaccurate, I have taken Haraway's discussion of play into account in my own examination of friendly, playful interactions between residents with mismatched power.³¹ Similarly, people engaged in play share opportunities to mock, invert, and question dominant power hierarchies. From polite conversations to gentle mocking to downright hostility, moments of contact can reaffirm power structures, but they can also rearrange them in new and interesting ways.

Contact between people in Columbia Heights can result in coalition. It provides an opportunity to humanize and empathize with fellow residents and flaneurs: those people passing through a space, observing and existing in the space without the particular investments of a resident.³² This can take the form of a seemingly meaningless conversation, but it can also take the form of providing support networks for residents regardless of race, ethnicity, class, or sexuality. Contact, though, does not always have to be pleasant. Contact can also be a moment of tension. It can be a fight between two people with varying degrees of power. It can remind newcomers of their implication in inequitable development process. Contact can also manage to be simultaneously pleasant and confrontational. A joke about gentrification can unearth profound truths about the urban landscape. Interactions with someone different from them can lead someone to their ideas about race, class, sexuality, and space gentrification, in turn opening up the potential for that person to take action against these forms of oppression. Contact can bring things to the surface that are erased and reformed in the neoliberal development process.

These moments of contact do not exist outside hierarchies of difference. Power still exists and picking up a neighbor's mail does not unhinge racism and classism. The physical proximity of people with divergent power and diverse social locations does, however, create moments that reveal the inequality the rhetoric of diversity used to sell contemporary Columbia Heights leaves out. Contact makes it harder to ignore the power dynamics embedded in constructions of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.

This could lead nowhere. It could also contribute to a reinforcement of neoliberal diversity rhetoric. The superficial unity of a neighborhood block could be used to absolve

a resident's role in the inequitable development process. Alongside these neutral and negative potentials, though, exists the potential for contact to expose how power operates in the urban built environment. That potential could offer new activist strategies for fostering more equitable spaces. My reflections on "contact" are supplementary to development solutions to fight inequality rather than a phenomenon that will solely facilitate social justice.

Mapping the Field: A Review of Relevant Literature

This research project is in conversation with scholarship from a variety of fields that, when combined, offer innovative theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the built environment, difference, and marginalization. In order to situate my work and its subsequent interventions in the field it is useful to briefly review previous scholarship. Though this review is not exhaustive, it is designed to locate theoretical approaches to cultural landscapes, planning history, gentrification, queer space, and difference under neoliberalism.

The study of cultural landscapes has not been a discrete field, but I have been influenced by scholars in a variety of disciplines that have all worked to understand the complex relationship between people and the built environment. My interest in cultural landscapes is framed by the acknowledgement of the mutually constitutive relationship between people and space. Furthermore, identity and attendant issues of power shape both people and spaces.

Henri Lefebvre's conception of "spatial practice" provides a useful grounding to understanding cultural landscape. Lefebvre argues that space is produced through

connected processes of experience in and of a space and representations of space. Though social construction plays a large role in Lefebvre's approach to landscapes, he consistently argues that meaning is activated through interaction and performance.³³ Michel de Certeau is similarly invested in the action and agency of people in space. Further illuminating the spatial aspects of power, he focuses on users of space rather than makers of space. Though he acknowledges the importance of studying how landscapes reflect domination, he provides users of space the agency to resist and subvert these spatial ideologies in their everyday lives.³⁴

Anthropologist Margaret Rodman's concept of multilocality represents a similar approach to understanding the complexity of the built environment. She argues that individuals and groups rarely make sense of a particular place in the same way. For Rodman, both interrelated processes necessitate a decentered analysis that focuses on ethnographic research on people in particular spaces.³⁵ Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Rodman represent a larger trend in studies of space that all focus on lived experience. This investment in lived experience, often coupled with ethnographic approaches, allows for research on the built environment that privileges users of spaces.

These frameworks necessarily ground my own work, given my interest in the disconnect between planning approaches and the inequitable division of resources among marginalized residents. These aforementioned scholars acknowledge the complex relationship between physical spaces and those who traverse those spaces.³⁶ They provide a theoretical framework that complements my own study of space, privileging people's everyday interaction with space rather than an analysis overly focused on the design of a space. My ethnographic work with residents aims to understand Columbia Heights in a

similarly ground-up way. Throughout the dissertation I define Columbia Heights based on how my respondents themselves view Columbia Heights.

Though the agency of residents is illustrated throughout the ethnographic analysis presented in this project, my arguments also rely on largescale critiques of planning processes in the 20th century. Critical studies of urban planning have provided a foundation for my own critique of top-down planning approaches. I am especially indebted to critical planning historians who have traced the Modernist planning impulse and newer approaches to ordering space that do not rely as heavily on top-down planning that often denies certain residents access to quality spaces and resources.

Modernist planning initiatives, rising in the late 19th century and gaining prominent through the first half of the 20th century, sought to organize rapidly changing urban space and “solve” the “problems” that these changes wrought in the urban sphere. Lewis Mumford’s influential book *The Culture of Cities*- published in 1938- encapsulates the modernist approach to cities. Despite his investment in the potential of the city to foster diverse exchange and human community, Mumford’s analysis of urban space is primarily focused on the “social ills” of the city that must be eradicated and controlled.³⁷. Understanding the modernist ethos’s detrimental effect on the marginalized is the first step toward locating the exploitation and agency of the marginalized.

One of the most influential correctives to these planning approaches was lodged in 1961 with Jane Jacobs’s publication of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs was concerned that planners had no sense of what urban residents wanted, needed, responded to and what made for a truly diverse and safe neighborhood.³⁸ Jacobs, however, does not deconstruct the very notion of top-down planning and instead replaces

Modernist top-down planning with a new form of top-down planning. A strong opponent to the slum-style public housing initiatives, Jacobs thought mixed income and racially integrated neighborhoods would encourage community. However, her investment in ideas that pathologize and rob agency from certain residents, such as “slum psychology,” illustrates her distance from the lived experience of working class people of color.³⁹

Jacobs does not challenge planning rhetoric that constructs certain people as “undesirable” (homeless, sexual minorities). Instead of finding ways to incorporate these people as components of the urban landscape worthy of resources, she views homelessness, drug abuse, and public sex as problems that need innovative solutions. Therefore the membership of her ground-up communities is limited to those that fit her social norms.

Other scholars have been more theoretically effective in getting to the inherent problems of Modernist planning ethos. Christine Boyer’s *Dreaming the Rational City* provides a critique of Modernist planning’s drive to classify and discipline space and its inhabitants.⁴⁰ Boyer’s Foucauldian analysis of the “apparatus of planning” figures the planning process as a heterogeneous network of responses to the rapid changes brought on by industrialization.⁴¹ Through her genealogy, Boyer’s work points to the disconnect between the lived reality of the city and the top-down approaches of insular state actors. Boyer’s work provides a framework to understand the relationship between state, commercial, and residential actors in the development process. Though planning strategies in Washington D.C. and elsewhere have begun to incorporate residential input, my project argues that the specter of the Modernist planning ethos still haunts the planning process.

The Leonie Sandercock edited anthology *Making the Invisible Visible* shifts the focus in planning from top-down approaches to the proliferation of what Sandercock calls “insurgent planning histories.” A focus on insurgent planning history not only uncovers the elisions in previous planning approaches, it centers the experience of marginalized people.⁴² In *Everyday Urbanism*, editors John Chase, Margaret Crawford and John Kalinski pursue a similar approach to planning. Shifting their lens from the expert planner to the ordinary purposes, “everyday urbanism” seeks out creative and imaginative solutions that acknowledge the fragmentation of lived urban experience and the need to provide a range of services to often marginalized individuals and groups.⁴³

Everyday urbanism takes the equity of all residents as its starting points. While there is overlap to these visions of liveable cities, the activist oriented lens of the anthology has been much more influential in my own study of the policing of deviance in Columbia Heights. The anthology explores creating temporary shelters for homeless people using parks, building to accommodate unlicensed street vendors, and other planning solutions that treat traditionally “undesirable” inhabitants as equal members of the community.⁴⁴ Despite Jacobs’ wariness of top-down planning initiatives, the critical deconstruction of planning exhibited in Sandercock and Chase, Crawford, and Kalinski’s anthologies is more useful for my own project. Not only do I locate the failures of state planning that Jacobs references, I also aim to understand often-marginalized people’s relationship to their neighborhood.

These scholars have invested in the equity of all city residents, but my own work necessarily needed a framework that acknowledged the inextricable role difference and identity play in the shaping of landscapes. In her essay “Regenerating Scholarship on

Race and the Built Environment,” Mary Corbin Sies centers marginality in the built environment by arguing race, ethnicity and other markers of difference need to be central objects of study in order to truly understanding the built environment. Critiquing planning history that addresses race inconsistently and additively, Sies illustrates the inextricable connection between structural racisms and the built environment.⁴⁵ My own work reflects Sies’s investment in intersectional approaches to difference as it shapes and is shaped by the built environment. Clyde Wood’s theoretical piece “Life After Death” shares an investment in using race as a primary lens of inquiry while also bringing the lens of “human rights” to the study of the built environment. He argues that a wide range of racial violence, from housing discrimination to mass incarceration to environmental racism, needs to be understood as human rights violations.⁴⁶ While my own conception of “social justice” distances itself from rights discourse, I have been influenced by Woods’s assertion that the history of U.S. housing and policing policy is nothing short of the history of state-sponsored violence.⁴⁷

Sies argues that, “the margins provide an important site of differential knowledge and strength from which to engage in political activity to define and achieve their own interest.” Though my project aims to critique inequitable development and marginalization, I am similarly invested in locating sites generative of counter-discourse, fighting the widespread rhetoric of diversity used to market inequitable development. The resistance I locate in the reflections of residents often straddles the line between traditional political organizing like protesting, voting blocs, and neighborhood activism and what Robin D.G. Kelley calls “infrapolitics” or “the daily unorganized, evasive, seemingly spontaneous actions form an important yet neglected part of African-American

political history.”⁴⁸ Kelley’s study of resistance in the Jim Crow south is still relevant in contemporary urban spaces, as it politicizes the critiques, jokes, and moments of contestation that happen daily on the street.

The theoretical work of Sies and Woods has been bolstered by case studies that center race and, more importantly, systemic racism, in the study of urban development.⁴⁹ David Freund’s study of suburban Detroit and Robert Self’s study of Oakland have provided models that frame planning as a process that has always contained built in racisms and- more insidiously- built in obfuscations of that racism vis a vis myths of the non-racist and non-interventionist state.⁵⁰ My own discussion of the rhetoric of social justice that shrouds uneven development has been influenced by Freund and Self’s discussion of how the reality of racist housing policies such as redlining and inequitable development of the suburbs was perpetuated by concomitant myths shrouding that reality.

My examination of Columbia Heights has been influenced by the theoretical and methodological innovation presented in numerous case studies that examine the urban built environment with a focus on race, ethnicity, gender, and class. These include John Mollenkopf’s study of the institutionalization of neighborhood activism in San Francisco and Boston, and John Bauman, Arnold Hirsch, Rhonda Williams, Steven Gregory, Clyde Woods, and Kevin Mumford’s studies of low-income black political influence and activism in Philadelphia, Chicago, Baltimore, New York, the Mississippi Delta region, and Newark, respectively.⁵¹ Howard Gillette’s *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and Urban Policy in Washington D.C.* has been a more directly relevant source for my critique of local development. I have expanded on this analysis with a focus on the *rhetoric* of planning documents, but his articulation of the push and pull between

federal and local officials and residents has shaped my analysis of both planning documents and residents' experience.⁵²

Literature defining and critiquing gentrification also shapes my approach to the urban built environment. The process of gentrification can be viewed as part of these approaches to space and power. Not all urban development can be considered gentrification, but gentrification as a narrative and development approach has had a major effect on the postindustrial urban landscape. I define gentrification as a phenomenon in which a previously disinvested neighborhood becomes flush with upscale development simultaneously catalyzed by and attracting incoming residents with higher incomes and more cultural capital.

On the surface gentrification seems to be a "block by block" event facilitated by individual property acquisition and rehabilitation. This image, however, is erroneous, as the state has continually subsidized development that caters to middle and upper-middle-class residents through housing lotteries and loan guarantees with relatively high income ceilings, and tax increment financing for businesses. It also involves either a lack of substantial restrictions in place to maintain affordable housing or policy that encourages the condemnation of "slum" or "blight" properties without ensuring replacement housing for low-income residents. These properties are often purposely neglected so that the property can be sold, rehabbed, and/or converted into condominiums.

Alexander von Hoffman's study of the "block by block" approach to development illustrates the kinds of services and support long-time, often working class residents receive from new developments and new neighbors. His caveat to popular critiques of gentrification's potential to marginalize working-class residents helps flesh out the

complexity of the process.⁵³ This process, however, reflects the state's disproportionate investment in upper middle-class residents over working-class residents, a key point von Hoffman does not centralize in his theorization. Despite the benefits for some working-class residents, block by block gentrification is a state-supported process of developing spaces that are almost exclusively available to upper middle-class residents.

Popular understanding of the process often incorporates an explicit or implicit discussion of difference- namely race, class, and sexuality. Whether it's working and middle-class African Americans wary of an influx of white middle to upper-class residents to their neighborhood or a coded conversation among gay white men "cleaning up" a "downtrodden" neighborhood, it's impossible to separate identity and difference from the cultural and economic aspects of gentrification. All of this scholarship has been helpful to my own theorizing as even forming critiques of arguments I find problematic have been productive.

Urban sociologist and city planning consultant Richard Florida popularized the embrace of gentrification as a valid and beneficial urban development strategy in his bestselling book *The Rise of the Creative Class* and its subsequent sequels. Though his academic influence has waned and his findings have been called into question, Florida's legacy remains in how development in disinvested areas is conceptualized.⁵⁴ Florida posits that the 1990s ushered in a new class formation. The "creative class"- made up of middle to upper-middle-class workers in industries such as symbolic analysis, dot com development, and the academy- are relocating to urban areas that offer high quality amenities, diversity and tolerance.⁵⁵ Florida employs a "Bohemian/Gay Index" to correlate an area's concentration of gays, lesbians, and artists with its influx of creative

class workers. His optimistic conclusion is that cities need to reinvent themselves to attract the “three T’s of economic development”: technology, talent and tolerance.⁵⁶

Florida’s thesis rests on assumptions about urban life and labor that perpetuate racial and class hierarchies. One representative example is that, for all his talk of the different “shapes, sizes, and colors” of the creative class, Florida illogically notes that racial diversity has a negative correlation with high spatial concentrations of creative class.⁵⁷ In other words, the more people of color in an urban area, the less likely it will be home to the creative class. Florida continues to frame working class people of color as wrenches in the cogs of creative class development when he discusses the revitalization efforts taking place in cities.⁵⁸ He positively reports that people are moving “back to the city.” Florida’s statements assume that everyone left the city. In fact, many people of color and working class people never left, but this elision clears the way for the articulation of urban areas as spaces empty and waiting for the mainly white, middle to upper-class “creative class.” Undesirable components that might threaten investment have been rhetorically removed, making the influx of the creative class an easy transition to upscale prosperity.

Paradoxically, Florida has more recently argued that the “dizzying poverty accompanied by extreme prosperity” in urban areas is a problem deserving of attention.⁵⁹ His solution seems to rest in paying service workers more money for their services. This suggestion ignores the fact that the creative class has the profit margin it does because of the exploitation of low-wage service labor. This shaky solution mixed with his erasure of working-class urban residents illustrates which class of people are the primary focus and beneficiaries of his plans.

Any approach to development that fails to provide solutions to provide whole populations of urban residents necessary support is useless in the search for solutions to bad development, however Florida has been influential in the field and the inclusion of his work provides insight into the ethos of laissez faire development practices I critique. He is also a representative example of how limited forms of difference are appropriated in service of neoliberal development. This ethos shines through the real estate marketing I analyze, illustrating the power “creative class” thinking still has.

Florida’s work represents a popular embrace of gentrification in culture and in scholarship. Tom Slater has charted this shift from critical studies of gentrification to defenses of the process arguing it is partially motivated by a desire to offer “quick fix” solutions to large-scale problems of poverty and disinvestment.⁶⁰ As Peter Marcuse argues, gentrification also needs to be contextualized within the changing economy of the central city. Cities have gone from manufacturing centers to centers of more professional, information-based output. This shift has affected who lives in the central city. Mid-level skilled workers, no longer needed in the central city, have been replaced by professional-level residents.⁶¹ The shifting cultural value of urban and suburban environments cannot be wholly explained by assuming residents will live near where they work. Suburbanites have long been commuting into the city without desiring an urban home. Conversely, working-class residents in the post-industrial city have still called that city their home. Finally, deskilled labor (i.e. the service industry) is still a vital part of the central city, but these workers can rarely afford to live comfortably near the retail and business centers in which they work.

My own work is indebted to historical materialist approaches to gentrification like Marcuse's that illuminate economic and cultural factors. Geographer Neil Smith also provides an excellent model for examining gentrification as both a complex process with numerous actors (state, commercial, residents, etc.) and a process exacerbated by the maintenance of certain ideologies.⁶² Framing gentrification as the taming of the frontier, Smith argues, is an ideological device that is part of a larger corporate and state neglect of working class residents of the city.

Coining the late 20th century city "revanchist," Smith highlights that displacement has occurred along side numerous policies, ordinances, and business practices that have violently counteracted social welfare programs and targeted immigrants, women, people of color, gays and lesbians, and the working class.⁶³ Smith not only elucidates the material process and consequence of gentrification, he juxtaposes development with larger neoliberal policies of the state. This nuanced and holistic approach has been influential to my own understanding of development as part of a larger trend toward the uneven allocation of resources.

I have also been influenced by several neighborhood studies that examine development by focusing on the conflict between long time residents and incoming development and residents. Historian Amanda Seligman's study of Chicago's West Side focuses on the governmental neglect and blockbusting practices that left neighborhoods disinvested, the organization of White residents to keep African Americans out, and White residents' subsequent "block by block" exit when these hostile measures failed.⁶⁴ William Julius Wilson and Richard P. Taub's study of four Chicago neighborhoods revises popular ideas of "white flight," concluding that the "flight" was not a mass

exodus of white residents as soon as residents of color started moving into neighborhood. The decision to either band together to “save” white neighborhoods or to move out of increasingly diversifying neighborhoods depended on white residents’ power to organize politically.⁶⁵ I avoid over-generalized periodizations such as “white flight” or “back to the city”, instead focusing, like Wilson and Taub, on how race relations temper decisions to move out of or back into a particular neighborhood.

Sociologist Mary Pattillo’s research on Chicago neighborhoods similarly focuses on residents’ reaction to disinvestment and (re)development, but adds a discussion of intrarracial politics. She examines the alternately coalitional and contentious relationship between Black middle-class newcomers dedicated to helping long-term residents and the working class Black residents who are sometimes wary of this paternalistic approach to more responsible neighborhood development.⁶⁶

Phillip Clay’s study of “incumbent upgrading” in an unnamed eastern city further specifies the specific circumstances of development, questioning scholars that reduce all private redevelopment to “gentrification.” Clay shows that the narratives of gentrification and displacement are often erroneously used to describe a process in which existing residents increase property values by investing more money and labor into their neighborhood. In the case of incumbent upgrading, displacement is not usually an issue.⁶⁷ Clay’s work influences my discussion of longtime Columbia Heights residents who have upgraded their properties and profited from recent redevelopment, showing agency and self-sufficiency. Columbia Heights, though, is a neighborhood that has an influx of newcomers coming in part because of state-sponsored gentrification. I argue that, in the

21st century real estate market, urban upgrades of any kind are susceptible to unsustainably high housing prices and an influx of residents who can afford them.

In his ethnographic study of gentrification in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn *There Goes the 'Hood*, Lance Freeman argues that gentrification is a flawed development strategy, but that scholarship has downplayed the increased amenities afforded to long-time residents in gentrifying neighborhoods.⁶⁸ Freeman illustrates that gentrification is not a zero-sum game, but Freeman's study does not account for the fact that residents will not be able to enjoy these amenities when they are priced out of the refurbished neighborhoods that offer them. Though I question Freeman's shortsighted embrace of transitional neighborhoods, his use of ethnography to complicate metanarratives of development has been useful in forming my own methodological approach.

As Tom Slater notes, one aspect of Freeman's study was championed by gentrification proponents. Freeman did not find significant proof of displacement of residents: the crux of gentrification critiques. Slater, however, argues that "proving" displacement would require a study that accounted for a staggering amount of variables and that included demographic information not easily gleaned by researchers.⁶⁹

Displacement also comes in forms beyond the traditional scenario in which a resident is forced to move because of rising costs. Freeman notes that the fear of displacement can affect longtime residents' wellbeing.⁷⁰ Ruth Bergman's study of the Squirrel Hill neighborhood in Pittsburgh charts the psychological trauma displacement (and even the fear of impending displacement without actual displacement) causes residents facing the pressures of gentrification.⁷¹ Freeman notes that gentrification slowly diminished affordable housing stock. Peter Marcuse has argued that, because of

diminishing affordable housing, displacement is a “luxury that some can’t afford.” Residents are forced to stay in a space they can barely afford because there are no alternatives. Marcuse, Freeman, Bergman, and Slater’s explication of the costs and benefits of gentrification have shaped my own search for more equitable development practices.

My research project is invested in neighborhoods that provide high-quality amenities and demographic diversity. I agree with Chester Hartman’s assertion that residents should have a legal and cultural “right to stay put” in high quality units and neighborhoods.⁷² Despite the focus on (salable) demographic diversity, gentrifying neighborhoods often funnel resources away from long-time working-class residents of color, leaving them vulnerable to rising prices, threatened displacement and increased policing. The preceding scholarship on gentrification has provided a foundation for my own conceptualization of gentrification as a complicated process often forged by a variety of state, commercial, and residential actors. Neighborhoods never will be and never should be static. My investment in critiquing unequal development is to argue for more equitable, ground-up development not to quell the just revitalization of disinvested spaces.

My research interest focuses specifically on the role constructions of race, sexuality, and class play in residents’ complicity in or resistance to gentrification efforts. Unfortunately, most of the literature on gentrification adds only one dimension of difference beyond a universal concern with class. The intersections of race and sexuality are vital to grasp, as the very compartmentalization of the two leads to an obfuscating conceptualization of gentrification. I am especially interested in expanding reductive

frameworks that conceptualize LGBTQ people as beneficial “urban pioneers.”⁷³ Though gay White men’s role in gentrification is a large part of popular conceptualizations of the process, the aforementioned works, partially because of their historical and geographical context, do not address sexuality in any way. To understand how sexuality, gentrification, and spatial formation relate to one another, I will touch on work that has studied gay neighborhood formation and on work that has begun to incorporate an intersectional analysis of space, race, class, and sexuality.

The study of “gay enclaves” can be traced back to the work of Manuel Castells. In his work on San Francisco gay male community development, Castells discusses class tensions between incoming gay men and indigenous residents, but he implicitly argues this community formation trumps concerns over displacement and competing class interests.⁷⁴ Other regional histories of gay, lesbian, and queer people provide examples of place making and claiming amidst a hostile state. Contributions by historians such as John D’Emilio, George Chauncey, Lillian Faderman, Esther Newton, Tamar Rothenberg, Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis chart the social and political organizing of gays and lesbians in urban spaces such as bars, house parties, restaurants, parks, and on the streets.⁷⁵

While these histories have been vital in conceptualizing spatial and social networks’ inherent resistance, they have not treated sexuality as one marker of difference constantly intersecting with other marginalized markers of difference such as race and class. A relational approach is needed, especially when discussing a neighborhood with such racial, ethnic, sexual, and class diversity. Though all reference the different experiences of working class gays and lesbians and gays and lesbians of color, they are

often compartmentalized as related but distinct experiences.⁷⁶ Furthermore, these regional histories have been largely celebratory. While an optimistic historical inquiry has had positive effects for resisting dominant myths of isolation, deviance, and voiceless oppression, histories of queer urban space have often existed in a theoretical vacuum that fails to address issues such as gentrification.

Recent work by Christina Hanhardt has linked the formation of a gay-oriented neighborhood to larger constructions of racialized urban violence. Hanhardt argues the protection of sexual minorities and the claiming of “safe space” is inextricable from discussions of private property, exclusivity, class, and race.⁷⁷ Hanhardt’s elucidation of the linkages between marginalization, safety, and property has been influential in my own work. Columbia Heights has not shared New York’s Christopher Street’s development as an explicitly LGBT neighborhood, offering an opportunity to study the deployment of discourse surrounding sexual marginalization outside the context of a nascent gay enclave.

Intersectional approaches to gentrification have also come out of recent queer of color scholarship. Dialing down the celebratory defense of “gay enclaves” scholars such as Charles Nero and Martin Manalansan have explored gentrification’s effect on not only working class people of color and white gays and lesbians but on queers of color, seemingly obvious actors in the process that have inexplicably been ignored.⁷⁸ The role of LGBTQ people in development and placemaking processes is a vital component to understanding “urban diversity” as a construct and a lived reality. Ultimately, my research moves beyond studies of sexuality that have privileged visible “gay spaces” and

instead explores how LGBTQ sexuality is deployed alongside other markers of difference in an area that is neither wholly queer, homonormative, or heteronormative.

Moving away from discussions specifically about space and place, I also rely on scholarship that has examined how diversity as a concept has changed over time. This project examines the rhetoric of diversity and how it is employed in the urban development process. The celebration of diverse cultures within the United States gained steam in the late 20th century and was institutionalized in corporate, university, and public culture. Sociologist Jiannbin Lee Shiao examines how ideologies of multiculturalism are formed through specific institutional segments. The concept has shifted because of shifts in rhetoric in universities, corporations, and other entities that have constructed certain kinds of demographic diversity as valuable in the global economy.⁷⁹ While her work is primarily focused on private organizations, she offers a nuanced framework that will benefit my own analysis of the multiple sites at which the ideology of diversity is constructed: government, businesses, online forums and through residents themselves.

In “From Americanization to Multiculturalism,” Dennis Downey illustrates how multiculturalism sprang from social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but gained popularity partly because it allowed for cultural pluralism without the need for deeper social transformation.⁸⁰ The pluralist ideals of social movement were stripped from larger conversations that fought against racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and class discrimination. If inequality is referenced in mainstream discussions of difference, it was and continues to be framed as something in the past, a hurdle we as a culture have cleared.⁸¹

However, even this largely toothless version of diversity acceptance has faced criticism from conservative critics who mark it as a threat to universal U.S. culture.⁸²

Arthur Schlesinger's best-selling mainstream manifesto against the "cult of ethnicity," *The Disuniting of America*, argues that discussions of difference and equality threaten to create "tribal hostility" and nothing short of a civil war.⁸³ His thesis, steeped in racist constructions of angry, savage Others, relies on a well-founded fear that those fighting against past and contemporary oppression do want a fundamental redistribution of power: something that would necessarily change the fabric of the United States.

Communication scholar Joseph Turow's critique of multiculturalism lies somewhere in between reactionary critiques and critiques of its superficiality. Turow argues that multiculturalism and especially the subsequent creation of niche marketing creates electronic "gated communities" that discourage coalition.⁸⁴ An investment in national unity runs through the popular discussions that both laud and despise multiculturalism. Both protect the existing power structures of the United States. Those that support contemporary multiculturalism use it as a way to reinforce U.S. dominance and use celebration as a tactic to shut down dissent and discussions of inequality. Conservative critics of multiculturalism view even the superficial celebration of difference as dangerous, having the potential to destabilize hierarchies that order the political economy of the United States. These narratives shut down a critique of state-sponsored discrimination, rhetorically absolving the U.S. of its long history of racial, ethnic, gender, sexual and class-based oppression.

Theorist and historian Lisa Duggan provides a useful analysis of multicultural politics under neoliberalism. Duggan defines neoliberalism as a dominant ideology that "organizes material and political life *in terms of* race, gender, and sexuality as well as economic class and nationality, or ethnicity and religion. But the categories through

which Liberalism (and also Neoliberalism) classifies human activity and relationships *actively obscure* the connections among these organizing terms.”⁸⁵ She argues that, under neoliberalism, marginalized people can be incorporated into the national imaginary as long as they become private consumers (or those to be consumed) with no political goals of redistribution of resources.⁸⁶

Duggan’s discussion of the centrality of race, gender, and sexuality in neoliberalism challenges earlier marxist scholarship such as David Harvey’s work on space, labor, and justice. He frames issues of identity as a distraction to the central issue of class warfare. He blames the weakening of working-class politics in the 1970s to the rise of fragmented/ing “‘progressive’ politics around special issues and the rise of the so-called new social movements focusing on gender, race, ethnicity, ecology, sexuality, multiculturalism, community, and the like.”⁸⁷ My understanding of neoliberalism and space has also been influenced by Gillian Rose and Judith Halberstam’s specific critiques of Harvey’s unwillingness to chart the central role gender and sexuality play in the ordering of space.⁸⁸

A large component of discourse surrounding difference under neoliberalism is the perpetuation of inequality through an obfuscation of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia. Though, on the whole, my respondents offered reflections about how marginality persisted in the urban landscape, some subscribed to the neoliberal myth of the post-difference world. To unpack how racist structures are supported by “post-race” rhetoric, I rely on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s expansive study of colorblind racism, or the explanation of “contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics.”⁸⁹

In addition to ethnography, I employ textual analysis of rhetorics of diversity. This analysis is indebted to scholars who have articulated the role superficial diversity has played in shaping contemporary culture. Sociologist Herman Gray's book *Cultural Moves* argues that studies on representation have put too much emphasis on visibility. Gray is invested in examining difference and marginalization, but argues that a focus on mainstream representations privileges inclusion within dominant media that is inherently exclusionary and based on the consumption of tokenized difference. His analysis has framed my own examination of texts that make racial, ethnic, sexual, and class difference more visible without challenging power structures.⁹⁰ Alexandra Chasin's critique of "liberation through the market" for LGB consumers and Arlene Davila's critique of normative, classed appropriation of Latina/o bodies in advertising both offer examples of how visibility often reinforces rather than contradicts hierarchies of difference.⁹¹

Emerging scholarship has tied critiques of difference under neoliberalism with an examination of how that framework shapes the built environment. This scholarship has been especially helpful in providing an investigative lens to examine the influence culture and attendant ideology has over the ordering of space. One early example of studying culture, difference, and space is Brett Williams *Upscaling Downtown*. Williams also focuses on Washington D.C., in the adjacent neighborhood of Mt. Pleasant. Her ethnographic study shows how a Latina/o neighborhood was upscaled by incoming middle-class white people commodifying the neighborhood's character. Because of the proximity and the similar ways difference was coopted, Williams has helped me frame my own examination of how race and ethnicity are used to sell particular spaces.

Williams's conclusions, however, stop short of demanding larger social transformation, instead suggesting ways residents can respect racial and class differences.⁹² My work combines a discussion of intrapersonal contact with a larger critique of how difference orders the distribution of resources.

Linguist Gabriella Gahlia Modan's analysis of Mt. Pleasant offers a similarly useful framework for examining the power of discourse in a demographically diverse neighborhood. Modan notes that "the mid-to-late 1990s was a turning point in the process of gentrification, and in particular, a kind of gentrification that *commodified* the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood, turning ethnic diversity into a feature that brought added symbolic value to living there and added economic value to real estate prices."⁹³ Modan's analysis of listservs, public meetings and other sites highlights how diversity can often be used as capital in a development process that often threatens working-class residents with displacement. Though Columbia Heights has its own unique development history, both Williams's and Modan's work provide a model of neoliberal critique that elucidates the material and spatial effects of this ubiquitous ideology.

Sociologist Christopher Mele's study of the Lower East Side expands on Neil Smith's earlier work, but adds emphasis on how cultural producers contribute to the gentrification process. Mele examines how cultural production and discourse about the Lower East Side was strategically used to first mark it as blighted and unsafe and then market it as an edgy neighborhood.⁹⁴ Mele's study of the appropriation of avant garde and diverse cultures in the service of uneven development is useful for its concomitant study of space and culture. Mele, however, implies that the cultural texts he examines have a direct, causal relationship to the gentrification of the Lower East Side. My own

work will temper discursive analysis with ethnography, showing how residents reject dominant narratives in their own negotiation of space. Though Mele illustrates how powerful representations can be, my own work leaves more room for negotiated readings.

Raul Homero Villa examines resistance in his study of Chicano culture in Los Angeles. He charts the dominant discourse that has constructed the barrio as a blight-ridden ghetto- “barrioization”- but also charts the prolific resistance to these pathologizing discourses in journalism, art, and literature. Dubbed “barriology,” these “intersituational discursive practices place-making tactics surreptitiously battle dominant strategies of urban space production.”⁹⁵ Villa’s work is a sophisticated theorization of discourse and counter-discourse, and is reflected in my own analysis of my respondents’ counter-discursive moves.

Arlene Davila’s study of East Harlem, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City*, engages specifically with the unique neoliberal context of urban development. Davila concludes that, “one of the central contradictions in East Harlem is the treatment of culture as industry to attract jobs, business, ad profits, and the simultaneous disavowal of ethnicity and race as grounds for equity and representation.”⁹⁶ Her analysis of development in East Harlem and its appropriation of ethnicity provides a useful frame for understanding the ideology presented in the marketing of a multicultural Columbia Heights filled with luxury condominiums and amenities out of reach for its long-time residents.

Navigational Tools: On Building A Mixed Methodology

When undertaking an interdisciplinary project such as this, it is vital to settle on a methodological orientation before beginning research. Given my interest in exploring the ways discourse and culture shape the built environment and vice versa, I primarily employed ethnographic and textual analysis. These methods, in addition to some core theoretical foundations, have allowed me to grapple with questions surrounding how culture, experience, and political economy interact with one another within the matrix of the urban built environment.

The theoretical principle underlying this project is the idea that space, culture, and people are mutually constitutive. Scholars have long since provided studies of physical spaces and their inhabitants. Similarly, there has been work showing how culture affects particular populations. This project aims to illustrate how discourse not only affects residents of Columbia Heights, but how discourse affects the physical development of the city and the attendant distribution of resources. I base my project in the belief that discourse has material results. Advertising, planning documents, and residents' conversations all map the built environment in ways that affect the physical space. The representations of an area affects what spaces are developed, what spaces are disinvested, what spaces are policed, and what spaces are deemed significant. The buildings that rise up or are torn down are not objectively constructed based on some a priori community need or profit opportunity. These buildings are the end result of a particular set of discourses about the built environment.

While the hegemonic ideology of neoliberalism is the dominant force in contemporary development, it is continuously destabilized by residents and other users of

space. That agency, however, should not overshadow a critique of diversity ideology and how it is affecting the landscape. I do not argue that counter-discourse somehow robs neoliberal ideology of its power and offers an alternative world. Though resistance is always present, it can be dangerous to over champion counter-discourse and lose sight of the often grim results dominant ideology reaps on the built environment. Instead the power of discourse and the power of *counter*-discourse need to be discussed concomitantly.

My approach to studying space also centers difference and power. Throughout all of my research I have located how difference shades the way space is conceptualized and shaped. My opening research questions that shaped the development of this project immediately gave primacy to race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. Rather than adding that analysis after my historical, cultural, and ethnographic inquiry, I *begin* by looking for how difference is discussed. Adding a discussion of difference on top of a discussion of planning and development belies the fact that difference has ordered the very structures of planning and development.

Given the complex intersections of markers of difference in Columbia Heights, I also strived to view these markers of difference as what Patricia Hill Collins has called “intersecting oppressions,” mapping how they fit on “the matrix of domination” that organizes them.⁹⁷ Dimensions of difference are never isolated. They are always operating simultaneously on the field of power. How they are perceived, deployed and resisted is dependent on particular individuals and particular contexts. In Columbia Heights, dominant narratives of development perpetuate stereotypical constructions of non-overlapping identities. White residents are assumed to be middle or upper-middle-class

newcomers. Black residents are assumed to be working-class. Gay residents are assumed to be white, male, and upper-class. Latina/o residents are assumed to be homophobic. The reality, of course, is far from reductive. Depending on class status, black residents' orientation towards the neighborhood and their neighbors change radically. Working class queers of color often share divergent political commitments with white, queer professionals. Using an intersectional lens, I will tease out these reductive scripts and analyze how different combinations that make up a respondents' social location shape how they interact in the neighborhood.

Intersectional analysis provides a rich field of possibility, but it also presents an overwhelming methodological mandate. Unfortunately, there are markers of difference that do not receive the attention they deserve in this dissertation. Columbia Heights is home to a growing number of Asian and Asian American-identified residents. A discussion of their unique orientation to the neighborhood is outside the purview of this study. My primary focus is on white, black, and Latina/o residents of varying class backgrounds. Throughout the dissertation I refer to "residents of color" as a term that groups the experiences of Latina/o and black (mostly African American) residents together. I argue that both racial/ethnic identifications have faced similar discrimination. Historical discussions of Columbia Heights in the 1960s and 1970s are primarily concerned with African Americans, reflecting their demographic majority. Throughout, though, I discuss both the shared experience of Latina/o and black residents, while exploring moment of interracial coalition and tension.

A comprehensive gender analysis is missing from my textual and ethnographic work. The urban built environment has always been ordered by gendered notions of who

has the right to claim space. If this research were to be expanded, I would examine more fully how gender has affected debates about gentrification and diversity. Throughout the document I do reference how gender has historically shaped ideas about urban development, from the stigmatization of female-headed black families to single white women's role in the recent redevelopment of Columbia Heights. Those discussions reference but do not carry out a more thorough intersectional analysis of gender in the built environment.

Similarly, I specifically did not ask for transgender respondents in my chapter on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer experience. My political reason for not doing so was that I did not want to collapse the trans experience in with LGBTQ experience. Often times, trans issues and experience vary widely from LGBTQ experience and too often the "LGBTQ" umbrella has failed to substantively theorize the unique issues trans people face. This omission, however, is not ideal and in the future, I would be interested in incorporating how transgender and sexuality shape people's understanding of the neighborhood.

Including ethnography in this examination allows residents' experience to reaffirm and challenge the texts I analyze. It is also vital because it helps articulate the complex ways diversity is operationalized by and between residents. As John Horton's *The Politics of Diversity* articulates, conflict and coalition along race, ethnicity, and class lines constantly shift. Furthermore, these interactions are often ephemeral and hard to capture without ethnography.⁹⁸ In their study of Monterey Park, California, Horton and his team of ethnographers were able to illustrate more than an analysis of archives and written texts.⁹⁹ My inclusion of ethnography has revealed sentiments that both confirm

and challenge the rhetoric and ideology found in such texts as planning literature and real estate marketing.

My focus on resident experience came from my investment in understanding the story on the street. The images and narratives constructed by various texts have meaning and power, but rhetoric needs to be tempered with how it was experienced; what people felt about these changes. These stories are subject to the rich filters that shape respondents' experiences. They are not wholly veracious accounts of what happened. But even, and almost especially, because of their subjective remembering and reflections, respondents hold an alternative archive of knowledge often hidden from view in the textual representations of Columbia Heights. Exploring their subjective feelings has the potential to highlight how dominant ideologies are psychologically and emotionally taken up and circulated among residents.

My three sets of interviews with longtime residents, newcomers, and LGBTQ residents were necessarily shaped by my own experience in Columbia Heights. Before embarking on this ethnographic project, I engaged in auto-ethnographic reflection to understand my own subjective relationship with Columbia Heights. When I moved to Washington, DC I did not know about the traditional gentrification scripts that I've come across in my research. I did not know that middle-class singles were moving back into the city. I didn't know that major parts of DC were changing rapidly. I didn't know that gay men were often credited as the "pioneers" of changing urban landscapes. I moved to the city because it seemed like smart people who wanted to escape the homogeneity of suburbs like the white, middle-class, and heteronormative one I grew up in lived in the city: somewhere with nightlife, walkability, and history. Even though the scripts were

unfamiliar in their verbiage, I am sure they permeated my thinking. I found it safe enough to move into Columbia Heights and I'm sure it was partially because I had white, young friends (gay men, now that I think of it) who lived in the area and seemed to be thriving.

That naivete didn't last. In fact, within the first four months of arriving in DC from my year-long stint in a group house in suburban College Park, I had changed the entire direction of my research. I went from studying the trope of the "gay best friend" in popular culture, to thinking about how culture affected the rapid development I was seeing all around me. At that time, Columbia Heights was a construction zone. What is now the "crown jewel" of the "new" neighborhood was a hole in the ground. And I remember being awed by the fact that a city could just completely shift in the 21st century. I thought that an established city that was already as full and as developed as this one could only handle a few changing buildings here and there. I had no idea that disinvestment had been so ubiquitous in Washington D.C. that there were whole neighborhoods that could be transformed with condos, an influx of the creative class, and a killer marketing campaign.

Over the years as I become more intimately tied to the research I do, I have becoming increasingly alienated here. The neighborhood continues to experience a glut of incoming young, white professionals and students. I understand that we have a lot in common, but their overheard snippets of conversation about a new wine bar or the "transition" in Columbia Heights makes me feel alone in my concern about gentrification. I believe in the vitality of scholarly activism, but I am reflexive enough to notice how I am involved in the very processes of gentrification I critique.

For me, the moment of disconnect between me and other new residents hinges around consciousness. I read many of them (fairly or unfairly) as unwilling to acknowledge the marginalization built in to the development process they champion. I see them as indifferent, neoliberal subjects goodheartedly moving through a neighborhood that has been the pawn of inequitable systems. This acknowledgement does not itself translate into more equitable spaces. On the street and in terms of my investments in rent and services, I have the same effect on the upscaling of Columbia Heights. This is precisely why this dissertation articulates the importance of justice-oriented consciousness as a stepping stone on the way to actions that begin to encourage material equity for all residents of Columbia Heights.

I knew from early on that ethnography was going to be a necessary and major component to my research. As a scholar critical of top-down approaches to planning, logging the experience and sentiments of a diverse body of residents would be a base-level requirement if I was ever to produce a solution oriented conclusion for a better Columbia Heights. I also knew that the politics of ethnography were especially thorny when engaged in a large, diverse, often tense urban environment.

I am white. I do not have much experience living in the city. I was raised in a working class household in a middle-class suburb of Boston. My mother still doesn't lock the door in the house where I grew up. The vast majority of the students of color in my school system were bused in from Boston and I was not close friends with any of them. I experience the city as something novel and exciting. It is the opposite of where I am from, not a nostalgic reminder of my roots. Before hearing the stories of residents who did grow up here, all I had was collective cultural memory of Spike Lee's *Crooklyn* and

Sesame Street. It was an aestheticized city built out of superficial representations, even in those that highlighted creeping racialized menace.

I am also a queer-identified man. As I said before, I honestly did not consciously identify or disidentify with the traditional script of the “gay pioneer.” That being said, I like seeing lots of faces I read as queer in my neighborhood. I love being in a place where I can hold hands with a man and know that I am in far less danger than if I were in a less heteronormative space. When I came to the metro DC area, the first place I went was Dupont Circle. The thought of being in a neighborhood with rows of gay-oriented businesses and gay-occupied residences made it feel almost utopic. The secret or understated aspect of my identification could be spoken loudly. I was through the looking glass, only the mad hatters were responsible, well-regarded civic participants.

My experience in a more tolerant urban environment has not made my self consciousness or perception of danger melt away. I negotiate public spaces as a queer person. Men that do not immediately read as queer are always a potential threat. I take stock of my personal belongings and my gait, imagining what level of violence and property theft I may face. I am extra conscious of my personal belongings, but they seem so flimsily mine. My swagger alerts people that I would not put up a fight if someone were to mug me.

Despite my near-poverty-line salary, I am entrenched in upward mobility. I do have things to steal. I read as such, with my laptop bag, iPhone, and clean cut clothes-hipster meets professorial. I will go to bars that charge \$10 for a cocktail and \$30 for an entrée. My consumption puts me in a sought after niche, one that has been extensively solicited in the reshaping of Columbia Heights and the city generally. Despite my

critiques, I do partake in parts of the gentrifiers' lifestyle. I am more complicit than I often realize. Aesthetic choices are always already political.

It was my likeness to this group that allowed me to get a slew of interested respondents for my chapter on incoming residents of Columbia Heights. The people I spoke with were invested in the neighborhood and I think they partly wanted to prove their sincere love of the neighborhood amidst tension between long-time residents and the often transient newcomers. It wasn't necessarily a chip on their shoulder, but they were trying very hard to prove that they cared about the community. In my interviews, I was treated (rightfully, often) as someone with shared experience and cultural touchstones. I was constructed as a newcomer excited to see the change in Columbia Heights. I too was waiting for even more development and the long-awaited creation of a cohesive community of residents who all cared for one another. I also imagine that my whiteness made other white respondents feel more at ease discussing issues of race and racial tensions. Though elisions, stumbles, and euphemisms were present, I feel as though my social location and presumed philosophical orientation to the neighborhood created the presumption of a safe(r) space to let a subtle comment about "sketchy" Section 8 residents or a joke about "crackheads" slip on the record. This built in identity-trust was something I expected and something that I used to my advantage: an intraracial expose only accessible to people with my social location.

I was not expecting the dynamic that has developed between me and the residents of color I interview. Initially, I was concerned with issues of access and wariness. Why would long-time residents of color want to talk to a white, educated gay man who moved into the neighborhood less than five years ago? How could I not conjure up the very

processes of gentrification I wanted to deconstruct? But I did get some people to talk to me. They were self-selected group of people willing to trust me with their thoughts, but they were a group nonetheless. I do not know how this project would change if I were to interview residents who did not want to volunteer. Perhaps they are wary that my project is yet another example of a white middle-class scholar anthropologizing the urban experience. Perhaps they did not have time. Whatever the reason, given the unique perceptions of the various people I interviewed, the addition of different residents would yield new insights about interaction in the neighborhood.

What I found was that residents of color were often reticent to criticize incoming white residents. There were moments of pause and careful word selection when they talked about “Caucasians.” Only after a good amount of talking did more ambivalent feelings surface. If I shared a racial and/or class identification with my respondents of color I would have received different response. If my frank interviews with white newcomers were any indication, I most likely would have gotten more candid assessments of incoming white residents. Manners and assumptions held individually and collectively threw up walls before the interviews even began. I was welcomed in, but I was often not a confidante.

This process has revealed the incomplete and performative nature of ethnographic endeavors. I believe that is important to try. It is also important to get as much insight from as many different people as you can. But this insight is not complete. It is mediated by how I treat the respondent and how my respondent treats me. It is vital to highlight the spaces in conversation, to explore what is not being said. But even this is not a complete analytical model. Ultimately, I have to recognize that my project is limited by my social

location, hoping that- like the discursive practices I highlight in the project- this document will enter into a shifting conversation about studying and creating more equitable spaces for a wide array of residents. As a final logistical note about my respondents, the names and some identifying factors such as the streets they live on have been changed.

Discourse is largely the circulation of particular representations. Meaning is made through not only the selective presentation of information, but the absence of certain information as well. For my project, I chose three archives of texts that produce discourse about difference and Columbia Heights: planning documents, real estate marketing, and the Columbia Heights listserv. Each has a unique orientation and presentation, but there are some overarching theoretical frames that apply to all three fields.

Firstly, though I argue that these texts have power and influence, there is not a unidirectional relationship between the ideology encoded in the text and the consumer of that text. The reception of these images could be radically different from my own suggestive analysis. Furthermore, these texts are not viewed by all residents of Columbia Heights. They do not exist ubiquitously, shaping all residents' ideas about the neighborhood. Chances are, many Columbia Heights residents have not read the Redevelopment Land Agency's annual report or even logged on to the Columbia Heights listserv. Having seen these texts was not a prerequisite for my respondents. It would be an interesting project to show my respondents these images and present their responses. But that direct relationship is not necessary to begin to understand how the discourse of diversity is being operationalized by texts and by residents.

Time and again, there are links between the multiple sites of discourse production and the “discourse” of residents. As with all textual readings, my analysis is shaped by my own lens and social location. The conclusions I draw are necessarily suggestive rather than conclusive. I firmly believe, however, that suggestive textual analysis is a worthwhile endeavor. Developing specific research questions and looking at texts systematically with that research question in mind suggests interesting trends and insights that usefully supplement ethnography.

My orientation to each of the three bodies of texts in this dissertation varies slightly given the uniqueness of each. For planning documents, I view these documents as esoteric but insightful documents that reveal the rhetoric used to sell development to various investors and residents. While examining them, I acknowledge the influence of city officials, but also acknowledge that solely focusing on top-down planning strategies ignores residents’ dynamic relationship with space.

When examining advertising, my analysis is organized around the principle that ideology in advertising is self-consciously ideological. In other words, savvy readers already know they are trying to be sold. Despite this self-consciousness, though, certain ideas about Columbia Heights are often effectively communicated.

Finally, my analysis of listserv posts is framed by the idea that posts were both a kind of ethnographic record *and* a lasting text, requiring a hybrid ethno-textual approach to studying them. This analysis is organized by but also complicates the often polemic scholarship on cyberspace as a “public sphere.” I investigate the ways posts not only contributed to discourse about difference, but circulated competing ideas about “belonging” and “community.” Though my approach to textual analysis has overarching

orientations and goals, each body of work is taken as a distinct cultural form with unique methodological requirements.

The Federal Testing Ground: The History of Development in D.C.

The contemporary ethos guiding urban development must be viewed within the larger historical context of Washington D.C.'s history as a federal city shaped by often contentious relationships between federal and local officials, white residents and residents of color, and between low-income and upper-class residents. The following is a brief history of Washington D.C.'s built environment constructed from primary document research and indebted to the work of historians such as Howard Gillette, Ben Gilbert, Dennis Gale, James Bochert, and Zachary Schrag.¹⁰⁰

Washington D.C. has long been a demographically diverse city, home to thousands of African Americans and whites of varying class backgrounds, long before diversity caught hold as a powerful rhetorical concept. In the early 19th century, Washington D.C.'s free black population increased in concert with Maryland's move towards emancipation. As early as 1840, the proportion of black residents in D.C. was higher than most U.S. cities.¹⁰¹

After the end of the Civil War, this population continued to grow. Though Washington D.C. would continue to be home to a large number of African Americans, the end of Reconstruction brought a shift in Washington D.C.'s governing structure that would have dire consequences for its working class residents of color. As Howard Gillette notes, when Washington D.C. officially became a city governed by the federal government, social programs aimed at bettering all D.C. residents were largely phased

out to make room for city planning that focused primarily on the upgrading of the physical city.¹⁰² It was one of the first of many policy implementations that valued powerful residents over the city's poorest residents. This shift coincided with the rising popularity of the City Beautiful movement. Taking inspiration in the nationalist display of imperial power and technological grandeur in the 1893 Columbian Exposition's "White City," federal development of Washington D.C. hinged on the creation of a monumental core. In 1902 the Senate Park Commission drafted the McMillan plan, named after its sponsor, Michigan senator James McMillan, to develop the city as a magnificent world capital. It included plans for several monuments and federal buildings for the national mall, in addition to some of the first plans to remove dilapidated housing in adjacent areas.¹⁰³

In addition to building the façade of the national capital, Washington D.C.'s population growth also signaled the rising dominance of the U.S. In the years following the civil war the 600% increase in federal jobs drew thousands of people to the area. Unlike other industrializing cities, however, working class blacks and whites were not in direct competition for jobs.¹⁰⁴ Most black residents were in hotel and domestic service jobs because of *de jure* and, after the war, *de facto* exclusion in the federal job sector. From its inception, Washington D.C. attracted white and black populations looking for better quality of life. Simultaneously, Washington D.C. was a space that fostered the marginalization of blacks in service of increasing white prosperity.

One of the earliest examples of the struggle between federal officials, and white and black residents was the battle over Washington D.C.'s alley dwellings. These cheaply constructed houses built behind rowhouses were largely tolerated during the Gilded Age as a part of life. These structures were tolerated partially because the dwellings' residents

provided vital domestic and other low-wage labor for Washington's upper-classes.¹⁰⁵

This inaction soon shifted with the rise of Progressive reform, culminating in largescale "public health" campaigns to shut down alley dwellings and curb the spread of disease.¹⁰⁶

Given their proximity to the stately homes of federal officials and employees- not to mention the Southwest quadrant's alley communities' proximity to the U.S. Capitol- alley dwellings presented a threat to the well being of white residents. In the early 1890s Congress shut down the construction of new alley dwellings, but conditions in existing alleys remained.¹⁰⁷ Because of the cost of removing alley dwellings, bills to eradicate alley dwelling (with little comment on the relocation of alley residents) failed throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

The fight to eradicate alley dwellings gained steam amidst larger national trends that institutionalized city planning as a scientific process aimed at making cities ordered spaces of efficiency and beauty. The science of zoning gained popularity in the 1910s and offered new solutions to the chaos of the urban built environment. In this new trend, low-income residents- largely immigrants and residents of color- were blamed for the chaos and deviance in the industrial city. As David Freund argues, the science of zoning was closely linked to racial science, "tapping into whites' anxieties about 'alien' peoples, anxieties that suffused the national debate about unchecked urban growth, a new wave of immigration, and citizenship." Furthermore, zoning quickly became a tool to protect property values rather than a guide to determine the best use of land for city residents.¹⁰⁸ Combined, city planning initiatives that ignored low-income residents and plans that solidified their segregation and neglect, concretized the uneven urban landscape.

Most official governing bodies, such as the Committee of 100 created in 1926 and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission formed in 1926, were far more concerned with growing a beautiful city of parks and monuments. Howard Gillette marks this struggle between aesthetic and reformer goals in turn of the century planning and argues that, despite vocal opposition, Washington D.C. was ordered around aesthetic principles rather than justice-oriented reform.¹⁰⁹ Despite this, some Progressive reformers and City Beautiful proponents used these movements' tenets to advocate for better, affordable, and often public housing for low-income residents. In 1904 the Washington Sanitary Housing Company was created and built limited affordable housing to quell the conditions of alley life.¹¹⁰ Projects such as that had limited success and also exclusively gave housing to respectable tenants that could reliably pay rent. Those that were unable to find long term employment or who were otherwise deemed deviant were ineligible and constructed as not fit to receive aid. Additionally, many affordable housing units that were built were exclusively for white residents.

The local struggle to remove slum dwellings was reshaped as New Deal programs were rolled out nationally. With the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934, the federal government began aiding the home buying process by providing insurance loans to increase the amount of urban and increasingly suburban dwellings being built and purchased. The FHA, however, was specifically designed to aid white homebuyers and prevent people of color from purchasing quality units. The structure of the FHA racist lending practices reflected the large-scale practices of the housing industry. Although the literal "red lines" of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC, established 1933) are commonly cited as the birth of redlining, urban studies

scholar Amy Hillier has shown that the HOLC's maps were not that widely distributed and instead reflect practices that had been already established by the organizations and realtors that came before it.¹¹¹

Redlining was the institutionalized practice of lenders and developers mapping areas into desirable and undesirable sections, often based on the racial and class makeup of the neighborhoods. Organizations systemically appraised areas and divided them into four categories. The most undesirable neighborhoods were spaces with a concentration of black residents and were denied mortgage assistance. This practice of red lining was an integral part of the new FHA-shepherded housing market. As David Freund, Robert Self and others have argued, federal intervention in housing proliferated the prosperity of whites and marginalization of people of color.¹¹² Freund also reveals that racist intervention was concealed by promoting the myth of the free market:

New Deal housing programs initiated the propagation of two powerful, closely related myths: first, that the state's mortgage insurance and reserve system did not create new supply, demand, or wealth; second, because of this, that federal policy could not be responsible for encouraging racial discrimination in the market for homes. In the eyes of most housing officials, their private sector allies, and eventually countless benefactors of government largesse, it was not federal policy but the free market for housing that demanded segregation.¹¹³

The evolution of federal aid programs was dependent on institutionalizing a limited, racist social welfare state.

In addition to aid funneled into the pseudo-private housing market, New Deal programs also instituted public housing programs. The U.S. Housing Act of 1937 (The Wagner-Steagall Act) created the first federal public housing projects. As Peter Marcuse notes, however, public housing has never been a primary concern running through U.S. housing policy.¹¹⁴ Under the New Deal, housing projects were seen as a means for job

creation and later for other reasons such as housing for those in war production during WWII, creating housing to quell racial unrest in the 1950s and 1960s to current moves conceptualizing public housing as something outside the responsibilities of the government. Though public housing in the 1930s did aid some (mostly white) residents, federal intervention was more often a machine that exacerbated segregation and the denial of resources to residents of color.

As the representative national city, Washington D.C.'s built environment was the beneficiary of a number of Public Works Administration projects. In 1934, the same year the FHA was created, the Alley Dwelling Act was passed for Washington D.C. Funded through the Public Works Administration, the act created the Alley Dwelling Authority (ADA)- the first local housing authority in the country- which had the power to condemn property. The passage of the National Housing Act in 1937 granted the ADA federal funds to create public housing.¹¹⁵ Under its director John Ihlder, the ADA began with a mission to replace every unit destroyed in the condemnation of alley dwellings. Ihlder oversaw the construction of Langston Terrace, a blacks-only public housing complex in Northeast D.C. The construction of public and affordable housing, however, was overshadowed by other changes on the residential landscape of the city.

In the late 1930s, the federal government grew exponentially concurrent with New Deal programs and increased production leading up to and during WWII. The increase of jobs and employees led to a housing crunch and unchecked housing prices skyrocketed. The lack of affordable housing for white federal employees led to private gentrification of Georgetown, once a majority-black enclave. The displacement of low-income black residents continued with the construction of the Pentagon on the site of

now-razed low-income neighborhoods in neighboring northern Virginia. As the war production ramped up so, too, did the construction of temporary war housing. This housing, however, was almost exclusively for white government workers.¹¹⁶

In 1943 the Alley Dwelling Authority became the National Capital Housing Authority to reflect its increasing role in condemning units throughout the growing metropolitan region. Concomitantly, the nascent public housing experiment was critiqued by private developers and white citizens. As Gillette notes, public housing was first conceptualized as something that could coexist with the private market but soon it was argued that the private market (itself heavily controlled by federal intervention) could handle low-income residents' needs more effectively than the federal government.¹¹⁷ Changing attitudes were reflected in federal policy in Washington D.C. The 1945 District of Columbia Redevelopment Act created the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA), an organization charged with assembling land parcels in need of improvement as a bundle to be offered to private bidders who would then redevelop the parcels with government subsidies. The creation of the RLA, the driving force of development in the latter half of the 20th century, signaled a compromise between the planning commission and private developers.

The RLA's focus on large-scale development also signaled the growing popularity of slum clearance and urban renewal. Urban renewal centered around the idea that "blighted" areas were beyond rehabilitation and needed to be razed and rebuilt. Though the relocation of "slum dwellers" was part of the conversation it was by no means the primary concern of urban renewal advocates. When the Housing Act of 1949 made slum clearance a main priority, the national city became the testing ground for this

new federal policy. Targeting over 550 acres of the Southwest quadrant, the RLA razed the alley dwellings and other substandard housing that was home to hundreds of thousands of low-income black residents. Washington, D.C. became the nation's capital and the capital of this unique form of racial violence. The white city had begun the physical disappearing of its black residents.

The RLA's urban renewal project in Southwest razed 99% of the area's buildings between 1950 and 1965 and replaced them with housing, apartment complexes, office, and retail space.¹¹⁸ The 5,900 units created were almost exclusively targeted for middle and upper-middle-class white residents. Only 310 units were priced for moderate income residents.¹¹⁹ Not surprisingly, the thousands of displaced residents were forced to find shelter in neighboring public housing complexes and private rental units. Only 391 purchased private homes. These figures do not include the hundreds of residents that were not located by relocation surveys conducted by the RLA.¹²⁰

The new Southwest was not conceptualized as an upgraded neighborhood for low-income residents of color. Instead, it was an upscaled area designed to attract white residents who were rapidly moving to the suburbs. Throughout the 1950s, increased highway construction, housing policy that favored single-unit suburban dwellings, and decreasing investment in center cities and their working class residents of color all led to a population explosion in suburban areas. The city structure itself shifted to a metropolitan network model. The National Capital Planning Act of 1952 created the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC.) This organization shifted resources from the center city to the growing suburban areas outside the city. NCPPC vigorously supported the construction of highways, the decentralization of federal offices

into suburban D.C., and the disproportionate funneling of government resources into growing largely white and middle-class suburban areas.¹²¹

Increased suburbanization and the amount of (mostly low paying) federal employment and service work contributed to the increase of Washington D.C.'s black population. Black Washingtonians became the majority in 1957, making Washington D.C. the first major city with a majority-black population.¹²² Urban renewal and suburbanization exacerbated neglect and discrimination facing residents of color, but the 1950s also marked the increased mobilization of local black-led civic organizations critical of urban development policy. The Southwest Civic Association vocally opposed the Southwest clearance project, explicitly framing it as "Negro displacement" in service of attracting white suburbanites.¹²³ Though the displacement that took place in Southwest was a foregone conclusion given the amount of federal and private support behind it, the aftermath of Southwest redevelopment radicalized many D.C. residents to ensure that something similar would not happen again.

This advocacy and resistance continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Urban League was also instrumental in tempering the RLA's top-down approach to urban planning. By 1965, the Urban League had convinced the RLA to employ residents to serve as liaisons to voice residents' concerns. When the RLA began redevelopment plans for the "Swampoodle" section of Northwest D.C. (dubbed "Northwest #1") without public consultation, residents packed public meetings to demand more transparency and inclusion of resident input.¹²⁴ Similarly, mass protests of highway projects in the early 1960s that threatened to tear apart mostly low-income black communities successfully tempered the damage of large-scale highway construction.¹²⁵ Though the construction of

Interstate 395 would sever some of the cohesion of the city's majority-black Anacostia area, concerned residents did effectively lessen the scale of public works projects that privileged white middle-class suburban residents.¹²⁶

The growing civil rights movement bolstered local organization efforts. Nationally, civil rights discourse and the discourse of Liberalism generally began to shape federal urban policy. John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier" program and Lyndon B. Johnson's subsequent "Great Society" and "War on Poverty" initiatives called for the inclusion of the black urban electorate. First proposed in 1964, the War on Poverty resulted in Congress's creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity which funneled federal money into local initiatives to aid in job training and education programs. Similarly, the Model Cities program- instituted in 1966- was designed to contribute federal funds to disinvested urban areas.

Organizations such as the Model Inner Cities Community Development Organization (MICCO), created by Reverend and Civil Rights activist Walter Fauntroy in 1966, were organized to curb development that dispossessed black residents like that in Southwest. Illustrating an ephemeral shift towards more inclusive planning, the RLA granted MICCO \$200,000 to prepare a redevelopment plan for the Shaw neighborhood in Northwest, D.C.¹²⁷ The increase of social welfare under Johnson exhibited an unprecedented focus on low-income, black urban residents; however the program never had the conceptual framework or follow through to substantively redress the structures of racism built into policy and the market.

Firstly, these initiatives were only instituted reluctantly as the grassroots Civil Rights movement gained momentum and demanded governmental attention. Secondly,

the War on Poverty was undergirded by growing “culture of poverty” arguments first popularized by anthropologist Oscar Lewis in 1959. The case for anti-poverty programs was based not on the historic oppression of racist structures but on the assumption that African Americans’ poverty was the effect of family disorganization, an over-abundance of female-headed households, and a pathological inability to escape their circumstances. By the time Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s infamous report *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* was released in 1965, the pathologizing of low-income residents of color was institutionalized in federal policy.¹²⁸ Black men were targeted for job training; however this training was designed to restore the patriarchal nuclear family structure.

As Niara Sudarkasa has argued, Moynihan and others who critiqued single-parent, female-headed households failed to realize that female-headed households have long been a stable tenet of African-American familial organization, even when a father-figure is present.¹²⁹ Despite the inaccuracy of these claims, black women continued to bear the brunt of this ideology. They were blamed for the dissolution of African American prosperity in both federal policy and even within some civil rights and black power organizations.¹³⁰ More generally, Jodi Melamed, Mary Dudziak, and other scholars have argued, the liberalism of the postwar era involved conceptualizing racial inequality as a cultural phenomenon. This allowed for policies formalizing abstract equality while obscuring the economic and racist structures that caused black oppression.¹³¹

In addition to the racist ideology at the core of the War on Poverty, federal control of anti-poverty measures threatened to fracture local activism. As Steven Gregory and John Mollenkopf have argued, these programs did involve black constituents but also

redirected their labor in service of bureaucratic initiatives that failed to redress systemic inequality. The War on Poverty effectively weakened the power of community-based groups while expanding the control and influence of local and federal governmental power.¹³²

The scale and funding of these initiatives dwindled and were eventually ended under the Nixon administration in the early 1970s. Yet, even before the official end of these social welfare programs, black residents expressed discontent with the programs' results. The War on Poverty's lack of progress in bettering urban residents of color led to the increase of more radical liberation politics among African Americans. The War on Poverty did, however, undermine some of Black Power's radical mobilization by, as Harold S. Jolly argues, "co-opting precious resources and... creating middle-class African Americans who would maintain law and order, thus protecting their interests at the expense of African American interests."¹³³ In other words, governments began placating certain demands to head off more radical acts of resistance. One such move was Lyndon Johnson's decision to reorganize the city government into an appointed city council and a Mayor-Commissioner in 1967.¹³⁴ This gave these now majority black leaders more power in governing local affairs. These officials, however, were firmly entrenched in the black bourgeoisies and did not necessarily represent low-income residents of color's interests. The push and pull between radical black organizations and the increasingly powerful black local officials would only grow in the aftermath of the watershed moment of mid-century Washington D.C. history: the civil uprisings of 1968.

The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968 prompted hundreds of black Washingtonians in the most disinvested areas of the city to channel their

frustration over continued marginalization. This chain of events began as an organized attempt to prompt area businesses to close out of respect. This drive was led by former Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee head Stokely Carmichael. By that night, however, residents escalated to more radical action through the targeted destruction of largely white-owned businesses.¹³⁵

The uprisings were concentrated in black residential and shopping districts, including Northwest's 14th Street Corridor (including Columbia Heights) and the H Street Corridor in Northeast D.C. The uprising mirrored not only simultaneous uprisings in dozens of other cities, but other uprisings in other cities and in Washington D.C. in the years leading up to the 1968 uprising as well. Though the assassination sparked the uprising, the events in the five days that followed were actions of somewhat organized resistance to continued racism in employment, housing, and education. At the time of the uprising, 25,000 people were listed as unemployed (4% of the workforce,) a disproportionate amount of those people being African American.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the stores that experienced the brunt of the destruction and theft were white-owned stores that had histories of black surveillance and refusal of service.¹³⁷ Black-owned businesses did not escape the destruction, but some stores that bore the words "soul brother" on the window as a sign of solidarity were not targeted.¹³⁸ The uprisings were an outgrowth of more traditional organized resistance. Beyond contentious questions of their effectiveness in asserting political agency, the pattern of these events illustrates the political nature of the destruction.

The (mostly white) local police and National Guard were called in to quell the riot and their effort, in concert with the willful retreat of participants, ended the uprisings

after five days. By that time, twelve people were dead, 1,097 were injured, and over 6,100 people were arrested. 1,200 buildings were burned, 900 of them stores. The damage was then estimated to be upwards of 24.7 million dollars.¹³⁹

The civil uprisings catalyzed the move towards more inclusive urban planning and policy-making that had begun during the heyday of the War on Poverty. After the riots, Mayor-Commissioner Walter E. Washington formed a commission of business groups and residents to guide the rebuilding of the damaged corridors. The Ford Foundation provided a \$600,000 grant to launch a community-based development plan.¹⁴⁰ Several churches, many of them with primarily black congregations, aided in building and repairing housing for those effected by the uprisings. The Department of Housing and Urban Development approved a \$29.7 million planning grant for the affected area, with a \$1 million grant approved to improve living conditions of those affected.¹⁴¹ The RLA was charged with redeveloping the majority of properties damaged and destroyed in the uprisings. Additionally, the National Capital Transportation Agency vowed to re-route the planned subway system to run through the damaged corridors to serve residents and encourage development.¹⁴² The vocal commitment and subsequent inaction highlighted one of the many disconnects between official rhetoric and fact.

In the years following the uprisings, Washington D.C. made strides in autonomous governing. The city was finally granted “home rule” in 1973 with Congress and Nixon’s approval. The passage of home rule created a mayoral position and elected city council, but Congress still maintained control of D.C.’s budget and court system. Within this time period the federal resources made available through Johnson’s social welfare programs were cut by the Nixon administration. The decrease of state resources

was matched with a decrease in even superficial programs designed to combat racism. As Senator Moynihan noted in a memo to Nixon, the issue of race “could benefit from a period of ‘benign neglect.’”¹⁴³

On the local level, the shift away from Liberal policies continued despite early rhetoric about fast and effective development for disenfranchised residents. Though exact figures are unavailable, the RLA had local black residents in leadership positions.¹⁴⁴ These leaders may have seemed “of the people,” but they often did not act in step with low-income black residents; perhaps this is an example of social justice rhetoric being used for personal class ascension. In 1971, the RLA moved from a negotiated bidding technique, which was considered essential to attract nonprofit housing sponsors, to competitive bidding that attracted more substantial investors less committed to affordable housing. Under the auspices of more effectively and quickly selling off bundled parcels to redevelop after the uprising, the RLA shifted its practices away from resident-inclusive development to a model that catered to private investors.¹⁴⁵ In 1972, the RLA cut all contracts with MICCO. Melvin Mister, head of the RLA, argued that the organization would be much more effective if it was solely in charge of selling off its parcels and if it worked more closely with the developers who were the targeted buyers of said parcels. In that same year a blue ribbon committee appointed by the D.C. Council recommended that the RLA be given sole authority for urban development and praised it for severing ties with MICCO.¹⁴⁶

The backlash against community-inclusive planning itself led to a backlash among D.C. voters. In 1979, voters elected Marion Barry to office. Barry, the founder of the D.C. chapter of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and long-time

black housing and employment crusader, had campaigned as someone outside the black political elite establishment. He also, however, courted white liberal voters and promised to bring the city together. This combination of social justice rhetoric and pro-development zeal favored by many white constituents won him the election.¹⁴⁷ As years went on he would continually use black dissatisfaction with continued racism and neglect to gain support, though his favor with whites diminished as years went on and he was more and more embroiled in personal and political scandal.¹⁴⁸

Soon after he was elected, Barry was faced with a fiscal crisis that resulted in massive city layoffs. To fight this crisis, Barry primarily focused on reestablishing D.C.'s tax base vis a vis residential and commercial development that would compete with the suburbs and attract middle and upper-class residents back to the city. He issued numerous tax-exempt bonds to attract new investment, especially in the downtown area. His efforts were successful in that they yielded unprecedented amounts of market rate commercial and, to a lesser extent, residential units.¹⁴⁹

Barry's reinvestment strategy signaled a new era in urban planning. Shaped by the Liberal movements that came before, and Conservative slashes in spending under Nixon and Reagan, neoliberal urban development began taking shape. I characterize neoliberal development as the dismantling of social welfare programs such as the restructuring of welfare payments under the Clinton administration and continued deregulation for corporate entities, the erasure and attendant maintenance of systemic structures of racial and economic oppression, and an increased rhetorical celebration of diverse urban populations. Neoliberal development borrows the equality rhetoric seen in Liberal programs such as the War on Poverty, but continues those programs' investment in top-

down distribution strategies that often fell short of more radical equality initiatives.¹⁵⁰

Conservative moves to cut funding were more ideologically harsh on poor people of color, but the cuts have been sustained through the neoliberal moment, dressed in a more inclusive rhetoric but denying certain populations access to state resources all the same.

Through the 1990s, neoliberal development continued under the subsequent mayoral tenures of Sharon Pratt Kelly, Marion Barry in his fourth term, and Anthony Williams in the 1990s. Comprehensive plans for Washington, D.C., advocated for increased economic development in the form of public-private partnerships that largely benefitted middle and upper-middle-class residents. The Great Society was a distant memory.

Throughout the 1990s, the department of Housing and Urban Development was under attack by a majority-Republican congress. Fighting for their very existence, then Secretary Henry Cisneros and HUD vowed to substantially rework public housing to overcome the tarnished image of overcrowded, poorly managed public housing complexes. Federal housing and urban development programs under the Clinton administration also institutionalized New Urbanist principles that advocated for mixed-use and mixed-income communities. The HOPE VI program, passed in 1993, was designed to shift focus from concentrated housing projects to mixed income development. HOPE VI simultaneously funded the improvement of some existing public housing complexes and voucher programs that subsidized rent in privately owned units.¹⁵¹

Over the last two decades, public housing programs have drastically shifted towards the Section 8 voucher program rather than the construction of public housing.

This shift rests on the assumption that concentrated poverty leads to increased crime and desperation among residents.¹⁵² Concentrated affordable housing also negatively affected the value of surrounding property. Incoming residents in gentrifying areas argued that certain neighborhoods (namely the ones experiencing upscale development) were unduly burdened with too many affordable housing units and the crime popularly associated with those units' residents. The push to disperse low-income residents and the push to gentrify neighborhoods hardly seems coincidental. This shift created waiting lists for public housing in the tens of thousands, and decreased the total number of affordable housing units in the city.¹⁵³

In addition to changes in affordable housing policy, economic development strategies have steered public money to subsidize private development. In the 1990s, programs such as "Empowerment Zones" and "Enterprise Communities" gave public grants and tax incentives to private developers willing to develop historically disinvested "zones." With the passage of "Renewal Communities" in 2001, restrictions on the use of public funds and tax incentives loosened further, allowing tax incentives to be granted for a wider range of development.¹⁵⁴ This deregulation of public investment in private development led to an expanded notion of what kind of investment would benefit a neighborhood. These initiatives supported more upscale development. The implicit argument was that- even if the development was not directly within reach for low-income residents- it would benefit the quality and safety of the neighborhood.

In 2009, Washington D.C. instituted new inclusionary zoning requirements as a development strategy designed to combat concentration of poverty and ensure that rapid housing development would include an affordable unit component. Currently, most new

condominium and apartment buildings need to devote at least 20% of their units to lower income residents.¹⁵⁵ While this strategy, alongside Washington D.C.'s longstanding rent control policies, puts safeguards in place, the reach of these programs does not come close to providing for the city's low-income residents. The explosion of market rate and "luxury" construction in Columbia Heights and elsewhere far outmatches the pace of affordable housing measures.

Rebuilding the "City Within a City": The History of Columbia Heights

The recent development of Columbia Heights hinges on an unprecedented use of public funds to entice private investment. This redevelopment scheme actively woos middle and upper-middle-class residents to combat Washington, D.C.'s depopulation and increase the city's tax revenue. The strategy is undergirded by the assumption that the promise of profit (in real estate and commercial business) will bring higher income residents and higher scale companies to a neighborhood and that investment will help increase amenities and decrease social ills spurred by disinvestment. While Columbia Heights' explosion of retail does offer long-term residents unprecedented access to local resources, property taxes continue to rise and affordable housing stock continues to dwindle. Public capital has been funneled into upward redistribution at the expense of the social welfare state.

Columbia Heights has a long history as a residential and commercial hub. It was originally outside of the city limits in Washington County and was a refuge for politicians and other wealthy families. When the Congress passed the D.C. Organic Act in 1871,

Columbia Heights officially became part of the city of Washington, D.C. It remained a wealthy area outside the inner city through the early 1900s.

Though Columbia Heights was primarily a white middle-class neighborhood through the 1950s, many white residents began moving to surrounding D.C. suburbs. By the late 1950s the area had become “downtown” for many African-American residents, partially due to the *de jure* and subsequent *de facto* segregation of the city’s official shopping district.¹⁵⁶ It was home to numerous white-owned shops that catered to black residents. It and the adjoining Shaw and U Street neighborhoods were also home to black owned shops and nightspots. Though it remained a close-knit community, disinvestment and increasing white and black middle-class depopulation added to an increasingly tense atmosphere.

Outrage over continued municipal marginalization hit a fever point following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April of 1968. The assassination catalyzed a civil uprising that destroyed most commercial establishments. Following the uprisings, city officials promised but failed to deliver swift redevelopment. The RLA, now linked with DC’s Department of Housing and Community Development, was charged with managing the numerous burned out and abandoned buildings and parcels of land in need of complete redevelopment. The RLA’s rhetorical commitment to rebuilding the area can be seen as the city’s partial acknowledgement that the destruction of property was a response to continued systemic neglect of D.C.’s residents of color. During its decades-long tenure, however, the agency was largely inactive, becoming yet another symbol of the government’s inability to meet residents’ basic demands.

One integral proposed strategy for development was the re-routing of the new Metro subway system to serve the destroyed 14th street corridor (including Columbia Heights.) However this plan was still unrealized long after all other Metro lines and stations had been built and put in service. The first phase opened in 1976 in concert with the national bicentennial celebrations. The Columbia Heights Metro station opened in 1999. There is no one reason why the Metro line was delayed. Funding, disagreements over implementation, and other factors stalled the development. It is telling, though, that despite similar issues most of the other Metro lines had managed to open in the 1970s and early 1980s. The rhetorical commitment to areas that, as Walter Washington said, “cried out” during the civil uprisings, belied glaring discrimination in the allocation of much needed support.¹⁵⁷

Black and the few remaining white residents who could afford to leave did so, relocating to other areas of the city and, increasingly, to nearby suburbs like Maryland’s Prince George’s County.¹⁵⁸ This sustained neglect only worsened with the local rise of the drug economy spurred by decreasing employment opportunities and the crack epidemic of the 1980s. Columbia Heights became shorthand for racialized, urban criminality. Taxis and delivery drivers refused to do business in Columbia Heights and it gained the reputation of being poor, dangerous, and desolate.¹⁵⁹ Columbia Heights residents actively struggled to combat crime and to get well-deserved, meaningful municipal aid, but the media continued to paint the neighborhood as an area “plagued by drug dealing and crime” with public housing complexes likened to “a lawless frontier.”¹⁶⁰

With the announcement of the forthcoming Columbia Heights subway station in the late 1970s, an increasing number of middle-class buyers began to purchase property

in the neighborhood.¹⁶¹ The speculation of future development spurred individual real estate transactions as an increasing number of middle and upper-middle-class residents bought and rehabbed property for residency and investment. As speculation increased, landlords who owned unsafe and unsanitary properties rented by low-income residents began cashing in on increased values. Many purposely stopped critical maintenance, hoping that residents would elect to leave or that their properties would be condemned. Once condemned, slumlords could then sell the land that had become far more valuable than the structures that sat on said land. When officials intervened to stop slum conditions, their solutions often aided the gentrification process. For instance, Mayor Williams's "hot properties" list of slum properties to condemn placed more focus on condemning the buildings (which would make room for higher-end units) than it did on finding adequate housing for the low-income residents living there.¹⁶²

As property values began to rise, many low-income apartments were cleared out and converted to condominiums. The process of eviction and subsequent conversion and rehabilitation was distinct from the largescale razing that took place during urban renewal. However, despite the different process, rehabbing became yet another development tactic that pushed undesirable residents from desirable land. Though rehabbing became a standard phenomenon in Columbia Heights throughout the 1990s, tenants fiercely and sometimes effectively resisted the practice. Tenant organizations sprang up throughout Columbia Heights. Several managed to buy their building to prevent their eviction, while others were not as fortunate.¹⁶³ Despite continued, organized resistance among Columbia Heights' longtime residents, "revitalization" was well on its way.

When the much-delayed Metro subway station opened in 1999- over 25 years after the first Metro stations- Columbia Heights continued to experience a massive influx of commercial and residential rehab and construction.¹⁶⁴ Average housing prices in the neighborhood went from the mid \$100,000 range in 1995-1999 to the \$200,000 range in 2000-2001 to the mid \$300,000 range in 2002-2003 to prices over \$500,000 since 2004.¹⁶⁵ Much of this development was sanctioned by public capital in the form of development rights, tax increment financing, and other public/private financing.

In 1999, the RLA and the not-for-profit Development Corporation of Columbia Heights facilitated a deal that gave exclusive development rights to local developer Horning Brothers and New York-based developer Grid Properties, a firm that also developed the Harlem-USA complex that anchored that neighborhood's recent redevelopment. The area surrounding the Metro station was razed and rebuilt into a large, block-sized mall featuring a Target and Best Buy, several apartment buildings, restaurants and retail. The development was subsidized through generous TIF packages for all developers.¹⁶⁶

In addition to the changes to the built environment, population shifts are changing the racial, ethnic, and class demographics of the neighborhood. According to 2000 Census figures and city-collected data, demographic trends in the Columbia Heights area have shown a rapid increase in white- and Hispanic-identified residents, while the black population, once the strong majority, has dropped. Early 2010 census figures reveal that citywide demographics have rapidly changed as well. The black population has dropped by 11%- approximately 39,000 residents- in the last decade.¹⁶⁷ The D.C. Office of

Planning estimates that the white and Hispanic population will continue to rise, ending “Chocolate City’s” tenure as an African American-majority city.¹⁶⁸

Presently, black residents make up 301,000 of the city’s rising 601,700 person population. Concomitant with that loss, new citywide census figures show that there has been a rise in Hispanic-identified residents and a staggering 30% increase of non-Hispanic white residents, from 50,000 in 2000 to over 209,000 residents in 2010.¹⁶⁹ Anecdotally, in Columbia Heights, the class of incoming residents often varies by race and ethnicity. Incoming white residents tend to be more affluent than the majority-working class Latina/o residents that have come to Columbia Heights.¹⁷⁰

Even with the slowed down market facilitated by the continuing global financial crisis, Columbia Heights is still selling fast. Wine bars, organic grocery stores, and boutiques continue to make Columbia Heights a destination for residents and local flaneurs. The present snapshot of Columbia Heights remains demographically diverse, but given trends in population shifts, housing, and development policy, the future of Columbia Heights is less certain.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is structured around several sites of discursive production about Columbia Heights. In each chapter I examine how texts and residents have engaged with difference and how the discourse frames material development. I end each chapter with a return to the idea of “contact,” examining its potential productivity among each set of residents. These chapters are framed by historical changes in the area, but each chapter delineates a particular “site” rather than one particular historical moment.

Interspersed between chapters, I have included an auto-ethnographic vignette to ground my research in my own experiences. As a resident of Columbia Heights, this project has affected me particularly deeply. I reflect on what it means to be living in and writing about the neighborhood, especially given my social location as a white, class-aspirational queer man who looks an awful lot like the target audience of the development process I critique. I explore my interactions with my respondents, with other neighbors, and with my friends and colleagues that have come along with me on this intellectual journey. The vignettes illustrate the complex relationships between identity and space, document and resident, and respondent and researcher. I share these feelings and stories largely to try to match at least some of my respondents' generosity in sharing the same.

Chapter two combines an analysis of planning documents with conversational interviews with longtime residents. In it, I show that difference is actively engaged with (as opposed to erased outright) in a campaign that uses social justice rhetoric to obscure inaction and development that failed to provide low-income residents of color with needed resources such as quality housing, education, and employment. In other words, planners do not erase people of color from their rhetoric. In fact they are vital to forwarding a socially just image of the city. But this rhetoric obscures a reality of neglect. To complicate the rhetoric, I illustrate how longtime residents often negotiate difference and power in a far more nuanced way. Chapter two spans from 1950 to 2010, elucidating how rhetoric about difference changed and how it shaped city planning. It ends with the multicultural turn in the 1990s, the moment where chapter three picks up.

Chapter three examines recent real estate marketing for new, upscale condominiums and apartment complexes. I argue that these campaigns use depictions of upwardly mobile racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity to sell Columbia Heights as a diverse space ready to be consumed by those that can afford it. Its appropriation of diversity threatens the very demographic diversity it seemingly lauds. Additionally, these advertisements cover over hierarchies of difference and power relations. I also include reflections from incoming Columbia Heights residents to illustrate how they conceptualize the neighborhood and its diverse population. I link their reflections to a process of constructing a “new” Columbia Heights that fights past disinvestment but benefits middle-class newcomers rather than the working-class residents of color who have long fought for resources.

After examining the different ways difference is used to sell Columbia Heights, I examine one such narrative in more depth. Chapter four turns to sexuality, a marker of difference that has been deployed in popular narratives of gay-led gentrifications. I critique governmental and corporate appropriation of this narrative in service of inequitable development. I also focus on conversational interviews with several lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer residents of Columbia Heights. I argue that Columbia Heights as a case study complicates scholarship on sexuality and spatial formations in that it is not a traditional enclave, but does have a visible and sizeable LGBQ presence. By exploring LGBQ residents’ reasons for coming to Columbia Heights, I illustrate how residents conceptualize it as a space that- unlike some race, gender, and class segregated enclaves- fosters multiple, intersecting, marginalized difference.

I chart how some LGBTQ residents have moved to Columbia Heights to create a space in which residents facing multiple forms of marginalization can coexist. Despite the fact that this narrative can sound similar to diversity rhetoric used to promote gentrification, I explore the potential of creating diverse spaces based on coalitional fights against marginalization. On a seemingly opposite but actually similar note, I end the chapter by analyzing respondents' ideas about safe space and violence. I explore how identity intersects in moments of aggressive contact and how these moments represent continued resistance to neoliberal ideology and the development it supports.

After exploring multiple texts and residents' corresponding experience, I turn to a "site" not traditionally viewed as part of the urban built environment. Focusing on the Columbia Heights online listserv, I chart how racism and classism were reinforced and contested in a cyber-battle for territory with "in real life" consequences. I analyze conversations about belonging, development, and crime that took place as Columbia Heights saw an unprecedented influx of middle and upper-middle-class residents in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This analysis illustrates how online discourse shapes the built environment, but is far from the utopian, democratic "public sphere." In fact, the site was often used by newcomers to claim territory while eliding the experience of longtime residents.

Notes

¹ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," in *Norton Anthology: Theory and Criticism*, eds. Vincent B. Leach, William E. Cain, Laurie Finke, Barbara Johnson, John McGowan, and Jeffrey J. Williams (New York: Norton, 2001), 1898-1910; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 69-96.

² John Dorst, *The Written Suburb: An American Site, An Ethnographic Dilemma* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 206.

³ The whole of Columbia Heights, while supposedly benefitting from this kind of development, is often obscured by representations that erase most working-class people, skewing people's understanding of just how many working-class people are in the neighborhood.

⁴ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 67-68.

⁵ Jane Ward, *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in Activist LGBT Organizations* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 45.

⁶ Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text*, ed. Robert J.C. Young (London: Routledge, 1971), 210.

⁷ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Norton Anthology: Theory and Criticism*, eds. Vincent B. Leach, William E. Cain, Laurie Finke, Barbara Johnson, John McGowan, and Jeffrey J. Williams (New York: Norton, 2001), 1669.

⁸ This is not to say that there is not a long history of marginalized but fetishized people using their "value" to gain resources and power. This can be seen everywhere from black entertainers to homeless YouTube celebrities.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 195.

¹⁰ The first two categories are related, but venue shapes the content of the talk, thus what is said in a face to face interview will be distinct from what someone writes in an anonymous listserv.

¹¹ The four levels of discourse I examine are not the only components that shape the neighborhood. Other examples include general law, public safety protocol, histories of Columbia Heights, popular culture about Columbia Heights, Washington, D.C., and urban areas generally.

¹² Louis Althusser, "From Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Norton Anthology: Theory and Criticism*, eds. Vincent B. Leach, William E. Cain, Laurie Finke,

Barbara Johnson, John McGowan, and Jeffrey J. Williams (New York: Norton, 2001), 1491.

¹³ Though some issues shaped by gender are addressed throughout the dissertation, I did not systematically include gender as a category of difference in my intersectional analysis. This omission is solely based on time constraints and should be included for any work that builds on this study.

¹⁴ Stuart Hall's work conceptualizes identity as a process of becoming, more of an "identification" based in one's relation to difference rather than a fixed marker. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990). Omi and Winant chart how the definition of race and its use in social organization projects has changed over time depending on the cultural and political context. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formations in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Judith Butler has discussed how the discrete definition of "woman," even when used to forward feminist theory and activism, relies on assumptions of finite femaleness. This reinscribes myths of identity fixity and reproduces unequal power structures that rely on such myths. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁵ The Gilbert-Kahl model is a widely used sociological designation of class based on income and profession. Upper middle-class people are educated professionals including those in upper management and medium-sized business owners. Average income is around \$150,000. The middle-class comprises people who are lower managers, semiprofessionals, foremen, and those in non-retail sales. The average income is around \$70,000. Working-class people are in unskilled service professions, clerical work, and retail sales. Their average income is around \$40,000. I use "low-income" to describe what Dennis Gilbert calls the "working poor" and "underclass." I specifically use "low-income" to avoid the pejorative nature of the words "poor" and "underclass." Dennis Gilbert, *The American Class Structure in an Age of Growing Inequality* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 13.

¹⁶ For instance, because of the primacy given to the mythic "middle-class" in U.S. culture, many Americans incorrectly identify themselves as financially middle-class when they are either working-class or upper-class. See Pew Social Trends Staff, "Inside the Middle-class: Bad Times Hit the Good Life," April 9, 2008, <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2008/04/09/inside-the-middle-class-bad-times-hit-the-good-life/> (accessed 2/14/11).

¹⁷ Jiannbin Lee Shiao, *Identifying Talent, Institutionalizing Diversity: Race and Philanthropy in Post-Civil Rights America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

¹⁸ While that year chipped away at the blinding whiteness of the Academy Awards, as this dissertation is being written the current 2010 awards season has no people of color

vying for major awards, with the exception of one part-Filipina supporting actress nominee, Hailee Steinfeld. This is to say that even token inclusion can be short lived.

¹⁹ Arlene Davila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latina, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 8-9. For a general discussion of neoliberalism see Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

²⁰ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Peter Marcuse, "Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement: The Linkages in New York City," in *The Gentrification Reader*, eds. Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 333-347.

²¹ Despite the projects for low-income residents Marion Barry touted in the 1980s, I argue that the decline of the social welfare state started with Nixon administration development cuts. The decline continued through Reagan-era cuts, Barry's primary focus on commercial development, and through the neoliberal cuts and privatization of the 1990s through the present moment.

²² Sara Ahmed, "The Nonperformativity of Antiracism," *Meridians: Feminism Race, Transnationalism* 7 (2006), 105.

²³ Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), vii, 310; Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 41-42; Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 243.

²⁴ Phelan argues that because concepts of rights and citizenships are tied to an inherently exclusionary system, queer people should embrace their outsider status of "sexual strangers" and imagine justice outside the inherently discriminatory regime of U.S. citizenship. This argument is also relevant to other "strangers" denied forms of citizenship on the basis of race. Shane Phelan, *Sexual Strangers: Gays, Lesbians, and Dilemmas of Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 5-8.

²⁵ I use "people" as an intentionally broad term. Ultimately, equality cannot be limited to those within the borders of a space or those with established citizenship. I acknowledge that the resources made available for social welfare are dependent on tax revenue among established citizens in addition to the global exploitation of workers and theft of natural resources. Imagining a socially just government outside the systems of oppression that have provided the U.S. with the resources to provide for some of its underprivileged residents is difficult and can seem unrealistic. Yet, though the specifics of this imagined future must be parsed out by scholars with a much more nuanced understanding of political economy, it is vital to remain committed to this future. Social justice is a misnomer if it is localized to a particular population or depends on exploitation of others.

²⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 2002), 56.

²⁷ Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 198.

²⁸ Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 173.

²⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6-7, quoted in Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 216.

³⁰ Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 232.

³¹ To explicate why this comparison is inaccurate, comparing marginalized people to less powerful animals conjures up imperialist, racist notions of low-income and/or people of color's inhumanity, savagery, and helpless victimhood.

³² Baudelaire's seminal definition of a flâneur is a passerby who experiences and is part of the city but who has a voyeuristic detachment to a particular space: a kind of outsider on the inside orientation. I argue that most people passing by a space do have a connection to it. Though they may not have a traditional material connection to the space like a rented or owned home, they still may have streets and parks they call their own. These flâneurs may take in the sights at a distance, but they can also make their presence known, interact with residents, and be a vital part of the social fabric. For example, a suburban teenager visiting friends in the city may not live in Columbia Heights but he may laugh loudly, catcall passersby, or stop to talk to a homeowner on a stoop. Therefore, my own use of "flâneur" references the reality that those that don't live in a particular neighborhood are still vital to the makeup of street life. For a discussion of the flâneur that envisions Baudelaire's figure as an outsider with the potential to destabilize assumptions about gender, sexuality and space- something that has informed my own understanding of flâneurs in the diverse city- see Sally Munt, "The Lesbian Flâneur," in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexuality*, eds. David Bell and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995), 114-126.

³³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Boston: Blackwell, 1991).

³⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³⁵ Margaret Rodman, "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality," *American Anthropology* 94 (1992), 640-656.

³⁶ My work has also been influenced by the triangulated relationship between space, people, and nature set out in Jeremmy Korr's "Cultural Landscape Analysis Fieldwork Model." Jeremmy Korr, "Washington's Mainstreet" (Ph.D. diss, University of Maryland,

2002), 477. Though I admittedly do not account for nature in my own formulation of culture, people, and space, I am indebted to Korr's investment in thorough investigations of spaces and their inhabitants.

³⁷ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Greenwood, 1981 (1938)), 8, 464.

³⁸ Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

³⁹ The focus on slum pathology, first popularized by Oscar Lewis and sustained in more recent works like James Q. Wilson's "broken windows" philosophy has been expertly critiqued in case studies such as Stephen Gregory and Rhonda Williams's study of political organizing within the low-income neighborhoods of Corona, New York and Baltimore, respectively. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. "Broken Windows: Police and Neighborhood Safety" *Atlantic Monthly* March 1982, 29-38. Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ David Harvey and Mike Davis have also provided impassioned critiques of the Modernist city however, as Judith Halberstam and Rosalyn Deutsche articulate, these critiques are consistently weighed down by a reactionary approach to critical studies of difference. I argue that Davis has a firmer grasp on racial violence than David Harvey, but agree with Deutsche's claims that Davis's noir metaphors reinforce assumptions about masculinity and the territorialization of space. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, 1992); David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Boston: Blackwell, 1997); Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); Judith Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgendered Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

⁴¹ M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), xii.

⁴² Leonie Sandercock, ed. *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998), 2.

⁴³ John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kalinski, eds., *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: Monacelli, 1999).

⁴⁴ See Norman Miller, "Street Survival: The Plight of Los Angeles Street Vendors" and Walter Hood, "Urban Diaries: Improvisation in West Oakland, California," in *Everyday Urbanism*, eds. John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kalinski (New York: Monacelli, 1999), 152-175, 176-185.

⁴⁵ Mary Corbin Sies, "Regenerating Scholarship on Race and the Built Environment," in *Proceedings, Reconceptualizing the History of the Built Environment*, Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, 2005.

⁴⁶ For a case study adeptly charting environmental racism and subsequent resistance efforts, see Julie Sze, "Environmental Justice, Urban Planning, and Community Memory in New York City," in *Echoes From a Poisoned Well*, eds. Sylvia Hood Washington, Paul C. Rosier, and Heather Goodall (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006).

⁴⁷ Clyde Woods, "Life After Death: Race, Geography, and the Study of African American Communities" *Professional Geographer* 54, 1 (2002), 62-66.

⁴⁸ Robin D.G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History*, 80, 1 (1993), 76.

⁴⁹ Though not specifically about urban development, George Lipsitz's study of the widespread legacy of systemic racism has been invaluable. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁵¹ John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: Race, Power and the Blues in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998); Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

⁵² Howard Gillette Jr., *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1995).

⁵³ Alexander von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block: The Rebirth of America's Urban Neighborhoods* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 2.

⁵⁴ In addition to critiques of pro-gentrification ideology such as Florida's scholars such as Terry Nichols Clark have argued Florida's statistical models are faulty. Terry Nichols Clark, "Amenities Drive Urban Growth," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 24,5 (2002), 493-515.

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- ⁵⁵ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class... And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic, 2003), 218. See also Richard Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class: The Global Competition for Talent* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007) and Richard Florida, *Who's Your City?* (New York: Basic, 2008).
- ⁵⁶ Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 249.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 234, 240.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 285.
- ⁵⁹ Richard Florida, *The Flight of the Creative Class*, 26.
- ⁶⁰ Tom Slater, "The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research," in *The Gentrification Reader*, eds. Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 585.
- ⁶¹ Peter Marcuse, "Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement: The Linkages in New York City," 334.
- ⁶² Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, 67-68.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 44.
- ⁶⁴ Amanda Seligman, *Block by Block Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- ⁶⁵ William Julius Wilson and Richard P. Taub, *There Goes the Neighborhood* (New York: Vintage, 2007).
- ⁶⁶ Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- ⁶⁷ Phillip Clay, *Neighborhood Renewal: Middle-Class Resettlement and Incumbent Upgrading in American Neighborhoods* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 1979), 7.
- ⁶⁸ Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).
- ⁶⁹ Slater also notes that the charge to prove displacement is purposely used to justify gentrification precisely because the accuser knows how difficult it would be to prove. Tom Slater, "The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research," 581.
- ⁷⁰ Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*, 163.

⁷¹ Ruth Bergman, "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood Goes Upscale: Redevelopment as Neighborhood Cleansing" (Ph.D. Diss, University of Maryland, 2010).

⁷² Hartman's "right to stay put" seems uncontroversial, but his focus on creating legal protection against displacement revolutionizes our understanding of property, especially in the current neoliberal moment. Chester Hartman, "The Right to Stay Put," in *The Gentrification Reader*, eds. Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 539.

⁷³ The recent publication of Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost's *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* in 2004 has pushed the role of sexuality in neighborhood development to new levels. Referencing Richard Florida, they add that "because a concentration of gay/lesbian couples signals diversity, knowing where they live can prove useful to those communities." Gary J. Gates, Jason Ost and Elizabeth Birch, *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* (Washington: Urban Institute Press, 2004), 5. This is based on implications in the work of Florida and Gates, but it also is an anecdotal generalization that I'm dedicated to exploring and complicating through my ethnographic work.

⁷⁴ Manuel Castells, "Cultural Identity, Sexual Liberation and Urban Structure: The Gay Community in San Francisco," in *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory*, eds. Manuel Castells and Ida Susser (Boston: Balckwell, 2002), 208.

⁷⁵ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Tamar Rothenberg, "'And She Told Two Friends': Lesbians Creating Urban Social Space," in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexuality*, ed. David Bell (New York: Routledge, 1995); Lilian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

⁷⁶ Brett Beemyn provides a representative example of how a queer regional history can better incorporate race and class. His discussion of gay men in Washington D.C. consistently teases out how segregation and racial, gender and class politics shaped the very landscape of Washington D.C. and, most importantly, how these early organizations of space have a lasting legacy that effects the privileging of one gay space over another. His tone is critical rather than matter of fact. Brett Beemyn, ed., *Creating A Place For Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 188.

⁷⁷ Christina Hanhardt, "Butterflies, Whistles and Fists: Gay Safe Streets Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto, 1976-1981" *Radical History Review* 100 (2008), 61-86.

⁷⁸ Charles Nero, "Why Are the Gay Ghettos White?" in *Black Queer Studies*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 228-

248; Martin Malansan, "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City," *Social Text* 84-85 (2005), 141-155.

⁷⁹ Jiannbin Lee Shiao, *Identifying Talent, Institutionalizing Diversity*.

⁸⁰ Dennis Downey, "From Americanization to Multiculturalism: Political Symbols and Struggles for Cultural Diversity in Twentieth Century American Race Relations," *Sociological Perspectives* 42, 2 (1999), 262.

⁸¹ George Lipsitz's discussion of racism in California is especially illustrative of the rhetorical moves that place racism in the distant past. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 224-225.

⁸² Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America* (New York: Norton, 1992); Peter H. Schuck, *Diversity in America: Keeping Government at a Safe Distance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁸³ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*, 10.

⁸⁴ Joseph Turow, *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁸⁵ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 3.

⁸⁶ Duggan, *Twilight of Equality*, xii.

⁸⁷ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Boston: Blackwell, 1997), 341.

⁸⁸ Judith Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgendered Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1; Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 41-61.

⁸⁹ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 2.

⁹⁰ Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁹¹ Alexander Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Arlene Davila, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁹² Brett Williams, *Upscaling Downtown: Stalled Gentrification in Washington, D.C.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 143.

⁹³ Gabriella Gahlia Modan, *Turf Wars: Discourse, Diversity and the Politics of Place* (Boston: Blackwell, 2006), 9.

⁹⁴ Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side*.

⁹⁵ Raul Homero Villa, *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 154.

⁹⁶ Arlene Davila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 2.

⁹⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 18.

⁹⁸ Ethnography can never truly “capture” an objective interaction, but inquiring about subjective experience is often productive of meaning.

⁹⁹ John Horton, *The Politics of Diversity: Immigration, Resistance, and Change in Monterey Park, California* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*; Dennis Gale, *Washington DC: The Inner City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Ben Gilbert, *Ten Blocks from the White House: Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968* (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1968); James Bochert, *Alley Life in Washington: Family, Community, Religion and Folklife in the City 1850-1970* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1980); Zachary M. Schrag, *The Great Society Subway* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

¹⁰¹ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 27.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 5-26.

¹⁰³ Jon Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 78. Pamela Scott charts the early process of developing the McMillan plan and its grand, European influences. Pamela Scott, “‘A City Designed as a Work of Art’: The Emergence of the Senate Park Commission’s Monumental Core,” in *Designing the Nation’s Capital: The 1901 Plan for Washington*, edited by Sue A. Kohler and Pamela Scott (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Commission on Fine Arts, 2007), 75-136.

¹⁰⁴ Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 30.

¹⁰⁵ James Bochert, *Alley Life in Washington*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 44, 47.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 219-221.

¹⁰⁸ David Freund, *Colored Property*, 51.

¹⁰⁹ My use of the term “city planning” refers to the generic act of providing city services to residents. The institutionalization of city planning would not gain steam until the 1910s. Not incidentally, the first national planning conference took place in Washington, D.C. in 1909 precisely because of its planners’ dedication to the City Beautiful ethos.

¹¹⁰ James Bochert, *Alley Life in Washington*, 47.

¹¹¹ Amy Hillier, “Redlining and the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation” *Journal of Urban History* 29 (2003), 412.

¹¹² Robert Self, *American Babylon*. David Freund, *Colored Property*.

¹¹³ David Freund, *Colored Property*, 174.

¹¹⁴ Peter Marcuse, “Mainstreaming Public Housing: A Proposal for a Comprehensive Approach to Housing Policy” in *New Directions in Urban Public Housing*, eds. David P. Varady, Wolfgang F. E. Preiser, and Francis P. Russell (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research Press, 1998), 23.

¹¹⁵ Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 190.

¹¹⁶ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 141, 147.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 149.

¹¹⁸ George Day, “Urban Renewal: A Slow, Painful Process,” *The Washington Post*, June 2, 1969, C1.

¹¹⁹ Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 163.

¹²⁰ Daniel Thursz, *Where are They Now?* (Washington, D.C.: Health and Welfare Council of the National Capital Area, 1966), 28, 57.

¹²¹ Schrag, *Great Society Subway*, 103.

¹²² Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 153.

¹²³ Ibid., 149.

¹²⁴ Redevelopment Land Agency, *Annual Report*, 1967 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, 1969).

¹²⁵ Schrag, *Great Society Subway*, 43.

¹²⁶ Howard Gilette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 167-169.

¹²⁷ Model Inner City Community Organization, *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?* 1968 (Washington, D.C.: MICCO, 1968), 5.

¹²⁸ For a particularly holistic critique of Moynihan's rhetoric and the war waged against welfare see Patricia J. Williams, "Scarlet, the Sequel," in *The Rooster's Egg: On the Persistence of Prejudice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7-10.

¹²⁹ Niara Sudarkasa, "Female-Headed Households: Some Neglected Dimension," in *Black Families*, ed. Harriette Pipes McAdoo, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), 173.

¹³⁰ The privileging of masculinity also continued in more autonomous organizations within the Black Power movement. For an examination of gender, urban development, and resistance see Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*.

¹³¹ Jodi Melamed, "The Spirit of Neoliberalism: From Racial Liberalism to Neoliberal Multiculturalism" *Social Text* 89 (2006); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹³² Steven Gregory, *Black Corona*, 104. See also John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹³³ Harold S. Jolly, *Black Liberation in the Midwest: The Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1964-1970* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 142.

¹³⁴ Howard Gilette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 180.

¹³⁵ Ben Gilbert, *Ten Blocks from the White House*, 19.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁴¹ Redevelopment Land Agency, *Annual Report*, 1980 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, 1980), 5.

¹⁴² Zachary Schrag, *Great Society Subway*, 197.

¹⁴³ Moynihan memo to Nixon 1970. Sam Roberts, “Moynihan in His Own Words,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 19, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/20/nyregion/20moynihan.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Most of the racial demographics of the RLA have been gleaned from photographs in their various *Annual Reports*.

¹⁴⁵ Hoawrd Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 185.

¹⁴⁶ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 188.

¹⁴⁷ Milton Coleman, “Barry’s Victory: The Racial Questions in District Politics,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 19, 1978, DC1.

¹⁴⁸ As discussed in chapter 2, this scandal culminated in his arrest in 1990 on drug charges. He then went on to win another term as mayor and is currently a council member for Ward 8.

¹⁴⁹ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 197.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of the characteristics of neoliberalism and the inequity reinforced in self-titled “progressive” and or Democratic initiatives by Clinton, civil rights organizations, and other entities, see Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality*.

¹⁵¹ For a cost/benefit analysis of Hope VI and mixed income housing programs, see Gayle Epps, “Emerging Strategies for Revitalizing Public Housing Communities,” in *New Directions in Urban Public Housing*, eds. David P. Varady, Wolfgang F. E. Preiser, and Francis P. Russell (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research Press, 1998), 121-141.

¹⁵² William J. Wilson And Richard P. Taub offer a study of the “ghetto” that places more blame on systemic racial discrimination and diminishing access to employment and resources, Wilson also argues that concentrated poverty increases crime. William Julius Wilson and Richard P. Taub, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). In their case studies of Chicago and Baltimore, respectively, Arnold Hirsch and Rhonda Williams offers a corrective to concentrated poverty theories, arguing that rather than breeding crime, these environments were vital to engendering close-knit, political and social networks that aided residents’ in fighting for resources and helping one another in their day to day lives. Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*.

¹⁵³ D.C.’s Section 8 voucher waiting list has over 30,000 people on it as of late 2010. Harvey S. Jacobs, “Housing Vouchers Can Help Both Tenants and Landlords” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 7, 2010, E1.

¹⁵⁴ Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000"
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/economicdevelopment/lawsandregs/laws/actof2000.pdf>
(accessed 2/1/10).

¹⁵⁵ Washington D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development, "Inclusionary Zoning Implementation Act of 2006"
<http://www.dhcd.dc.gov/dhcd/frames.asp?doc=/dhcd/lib/dhcd/services/iz/izimplementationactof2006codified.pdf> (accessed 2/1/10).

¹⁵⁶ Paul Schwartzman and Robert E. Pierre, "From Ruin to Rebirth in D.C.: Condos and Cafes Have Replaced Guttled Shops, but Who's Profitting?" *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2008, A01.

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of charges of racial, class, and geographical discrimination in the construction of Metrorail, see Zachary M. Schrag, *The Great Society Subway* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). Schrag is overly dismissive of these claims, but provides a synthesis of how residents articulated and resisted the discrimination.

¹⁵⁸ Dennis Gale, *Washington DC: The Inner City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

¹⁵⁹ Linda Wheeler, "Columbia Heights Residents Dispute Notoriety for Killings: Study Call Section of NW Most Murderous," *The Washington Post*, March 17, 1989, D1; Marcia Slacum Greene, "The Clifton Terrace War: Manager Fights to Uproot Drug Trade," *The Washington Post*, Aug. 22, 1988, B7.

¹⁶⁰ David S. Hilzenrath, "D.C. Board Opposed to Tivoli Bid: Haft Rezoning Request Could be Thwarted," *Washington Post*, Dec. 17 1988: E01.

¹⁶¹ Roger K. Lewis, "New Mixes Well With Old in Columbia Heights," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2008, F16.

¹⁶² Carol D. Leonnig, "Tenants' Suit Accuses D.C. of Prejudice in Evictions: Gentrification Caused Ouster, Hispanics Say," *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2004, B01.

¹⁶³ Sylvia Moreno, "Tenants' Dreams Rescue NW Building: Low-Income Housing Option Preserved With \$4 Million Renovation of Decrepit Site," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 3, 2005, B03; Mary Beth Sheridan, "In a Slum, Visions of a New Home: Resident-Owners Seek To Renovate Run-Down Apartment Structure," *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2001, T08.

¹⁶⁴ Schrag, *Great Society Subway*, 213. Schrag argues that the delay had as much to do "the delay resulted as much from extreme sensitivity to inner-city demands as from official disregard." This generous explanation, however, places blame on residents

concerned with equitable development for being too finicky or unrealistic, rather than framing the delay as something caused by those in power. The input of the community requires developers to work more carefully, but it did not need to stymie developers for decades. Furthermore, I argue that the rhetoric of absolute community inclusion was often just that: rhetoric. Despite the rhetoric the material reality was that a disinvested neighborhood in desperate need of development was the last area to receive resources.

¹⁶⁵ Neighborhood Info, D.C.,
http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/nclusters/nbr_prof_clus2.html (accessed 10/31/10).

¹⁶⁶ Eric Lipton, "An Angry Reaction Wasn't Part of the Plan: Panel Explains Redevelopment Vote," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 1999, B01.

¹⁶⁷ Carol Morello and Dan Keating, "Number of Black D.C. Residents Plummets as Majority Status Slips Away," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2011,
http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/black-dc-residents-plummet-barely-a-majority/2011/03/24/ABtIgJQB_story.html.

¹⁶⁸ D.C. Office of Planning, "Population"
<http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1400,q,648539.asp> (accessed 10/31/10).

¹⁶⁹ Carol Morello and Dan Keating, "Number of Black D.C. Residents Plummets as Majority Status Slips Away."

¹⁷⁰ Because reliable data on income by race and ethnicity is available for recent years, I rely on an assumption that is backed by general trends throughout the city and strong anecdotal evidence I have garnered from living in Columbia Heights for five years. This statement is meant to be an estimation and not a statistical reality. Neighborhood Info, D.C., <http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org> (accessed 3/1/11).

CHAPTER TWO VIGNETTE

Valerie says she's available to meet Saturday and that she'll round up some people from the neighborhood. I'm not sure what to expect, being used to the one on one interviews set up with email and structure. The underlying understanding that this is about a research project is ever present. I call her before I head over (just three blocks from here.) I hear voices in the background and Valerie tells me she has a bunch of people all waiting to talk to me so I should come on over quickly. I run out the door, eager and anxious to see what kind of group she's assembled.

I arrive and hear them talking down the block. They're all standing on her porch and Jeff's porch directly next door. A few of them are having a beer and they're talking, lively and comfortable. They clearly know each other and they are clearly friends. She introduces me to four men and goes back to her front yard to do some gardening. I take a seat on Jeff's porch and get to know them:

Jeff, a black man in his 40s who is clearly very close with Eric. Eric and Jeff reminisce about growing up in the neighborhood, pointing to houses and the street. It's nice to see them have the opportunity to point to the places where they grew up from their present day front porch. It's a neighborhood that stays with them/you.

Eric, a laid back black man in his 40s who lets everyone speak their mind and is so interested in listening that he comes across the street and hangs out for a part of my interview with Elizabeth and April.

Hector, a Hispanic-identified man in his early 40s. He is married with older children and has been living in the neighborhood since the mid-1990s. He is animated and welcoming, gently ribbing his neighbors and even me.

Martin, a black man in his 50s originally from Georgia. He is soft spoken, but gets impassioned when discussing the well being of his neighbors and the children of Columbia Heights.

Later, Chelsea, an outspoken white woman in her 40s, arrives. She has been in the neighborhood since the mid 90s and, though she argues with some of her neighbors throughout the conversation, it is clear that they share mutual respect and friendship.

Christina, Hector's fortysomething Hispanic wife, also arrives in the midst of the discussion. Despite entering in the middle of our conversation, she soon finds her way right next to me, quietly telling me her opinions and bringing nuanced clarification to Hector's points while defending his main sentiments.

Like something out of a sitcom, people come and go from the porch during the course of the interview. Though Valerie has told people that I'd be there that day, it seems as if they were just walking by on the way to their houses, saw that there was a gathering and climbed up the stairs to check it out and say their piece.

I can hear them all continuing their conversations across the street as I step on the porch of Elizabeth, a white administrator in her 40s, to talk with her and April, a late thirty-something white woman. We are joined by one of the rescue dogs April cares for when she's not working at her environmental policy job. The porch is painted a bright yellow with eclectic chairs and a table outside. Our interview is conversational and we get along, wrapping up our meeting talking about the critical mass of people that have recently arrived to the neighborhood and how it's wiped out so many cute neighborhood bars (too congested, too young professional-type, etc.)

By the time I have finished interviewing the first group and the two women across the street, I feel as though I have been welcomed into the most tight-knit neighborhood I've ever witnessed. Hector invites me over for a beer. Chelsea says I should come by if they have a block party. These porches and houses are shared community. The geographic nature of the block- cut off by an intersecting street and the local high school at the other (dead) end- has made it so that the majority of the neighbors feel a sense of belonging in this small, manageable sense.

I say goodbye to Valerie after making plans to come back Tuesday- a proposition that feels equal parts like a social visit and an opportunity to talk to her grandmother and aunt. She opens her arms and we hug. As I walk down the street towards the end of the

block I pass by the condos that some of the neighbors referenced when referring to what they *don't* want Columbia Heights to become. Two white men that I read as gay are outside doing some light landscaping. They do not say "hi" or acknowledge me as I pass by. Immediately, I am thrust back into the anonymous urban space I've come to experience in Columbia Heights. I realize that each block has its own vibe and that I have stumbled onto a rare space where diversity meshes alongside discordant voices, all glued together by a common respect. Good porches make good neighbors.

When I come back to interview her family members, the vibe is a little less welcoming. Not necessarily because of my identity I don't think, but just because it seems like my presence on that day is a bit of an imposition in their already hectic lives. Valerie's father and Martin's grandmother are very talkative. They offer a more explicit frustration with the neighborhood and its change over time. It takes them awhile but they all get mad. They are pleased with their life and their neighborhood, but they see that things have changed.

As I am leaving them, I walk by Jeff and we exchange hellos. I don't know why (as if he was going to drop what he had to do and offer me a beer,) but I'm disappointed at the perfunctory and distant manner of the brief exchange. I realize that I am back to being the anonymous urbanite I've been since I got here.

Listening to the 19th street folks' stories of unfriendly neighbors, I immediately felt indicted. As an interviewer ready to listen to people on the porches of their houses, they did not see me as one of these unfriendly neighbors. But back on my block, I knew I

would be seen as an amiable but disconnected neighbor. I am not extroverted with strangers. I walk by people and am often startled when they say hello. I feel rude. With neighbors I perceive as long-time residents of color, I do not want to give them a warm greeting for fear of seeming like I'm forcing them to tolerate me as a white neighbor. I do not want them to think I am blind to what is going on in the neighborhood. I do not want to strip our identities away, forcing someone to be nice to me as if the only tension was between being rude and being friendly.

Partially, though, that is an overly intellectualized understanding of my (in)actions. Mostly, I just experience it as awkward shyness. I do not make waves. I want to be friendly with my neighbors and will say hello back. I will smile and nod. But, I fear, sometimes I do not make the street-level connections that so many people- scholars and neighbors alike- view as the core of democratic spaces.

I like the steely resolve of walking down the city street with a purpose, but I'm usually pleasantly surprised if someone does say hello. I like making connections with people, but I'm just too self-conscious to initiate them on the street. I defend the anonymity of the city. I do not want to know all my neighbors necessarily. I don't want to be forced to exchange pleasantries. I firmly believe that we can embrace the anonymity of the city while still creating opportunities to come together to fight inequality. I do not think anonymity is inherently problematic, but being welcomed into the diverse social network of 19th street made me revisit clichés about “community” with newfound respect. Not only were my respondents genuinely invested in helping and laughing with their neighbors, they were also not afraid to call attention to how inequality (often mediated by hierarchies of identity) persists in the neighborhood and even on their block.

This was a form of community that did not cover over how racial and class privilege operated.

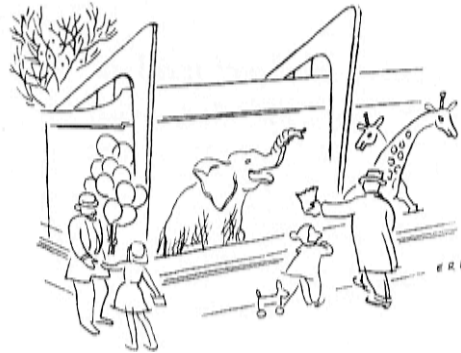
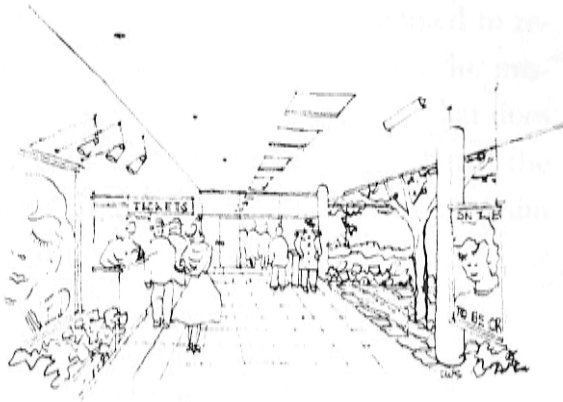
Friendly interaction is not a solution to structures of inequitable development. And being cordial should not be a requirement for access to resources. But it's hard to ignore the difference between this kind of intraracial, intraclass (though none were at the bottom of the class hierarchy) community-making and the anonymous, silent tact adopted by some newcomers, myself and my chapter three respondents included. At the very least, my experience talking with these respondents cemented the fact that these everyday intrapersonal decisions- to wave, to invite someone over for a drink, to ignore- are political. The myth of the objective researcher was shattered the moment I hit the streets.

CHAPTER TWO

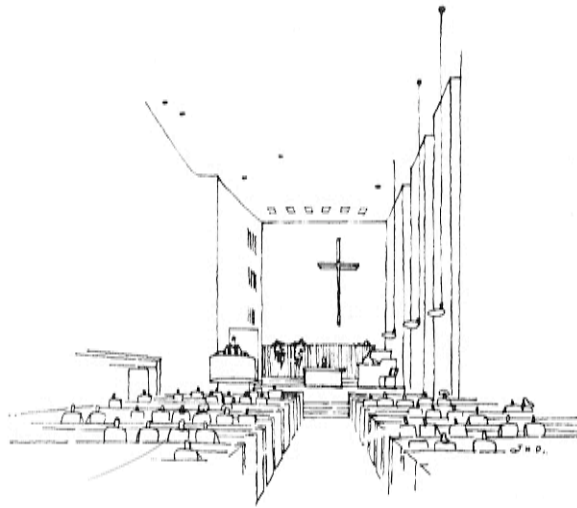
REBUILDING CHOCOLATE CITY: THE NEGOTIATION OF DIFFERENCE WITHIN PLANNING LITERATURE AND AMONG LONGTIME RESIDENTS

“Plans are only as good as the vision that inspires them.” So begins the “What Kind of City Do We Want” chapter in *Of Plans and People: Planning the City of Washington for its people and as a worthy symbol of a great nation*, published in 1950 by the Washington-Metropolitan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.¹ The visions of ideal urban life are realized throughout this publication with whimsical sketches of Washingtonians enjoying parks, zoos, and retail hubs. Far from the “familiar chaos” usually seen in cities, the planned city is spotted with idyllic scenes of Americana: two little boys dressed as a sailor and a cowboy float a sailboat in a pond, a well dressed couple admire their carved initials in a park tree (Figures 4, 5, 6)². And though the sketches are drawn with simple lines in black and white, it is clear that these residents are all white.

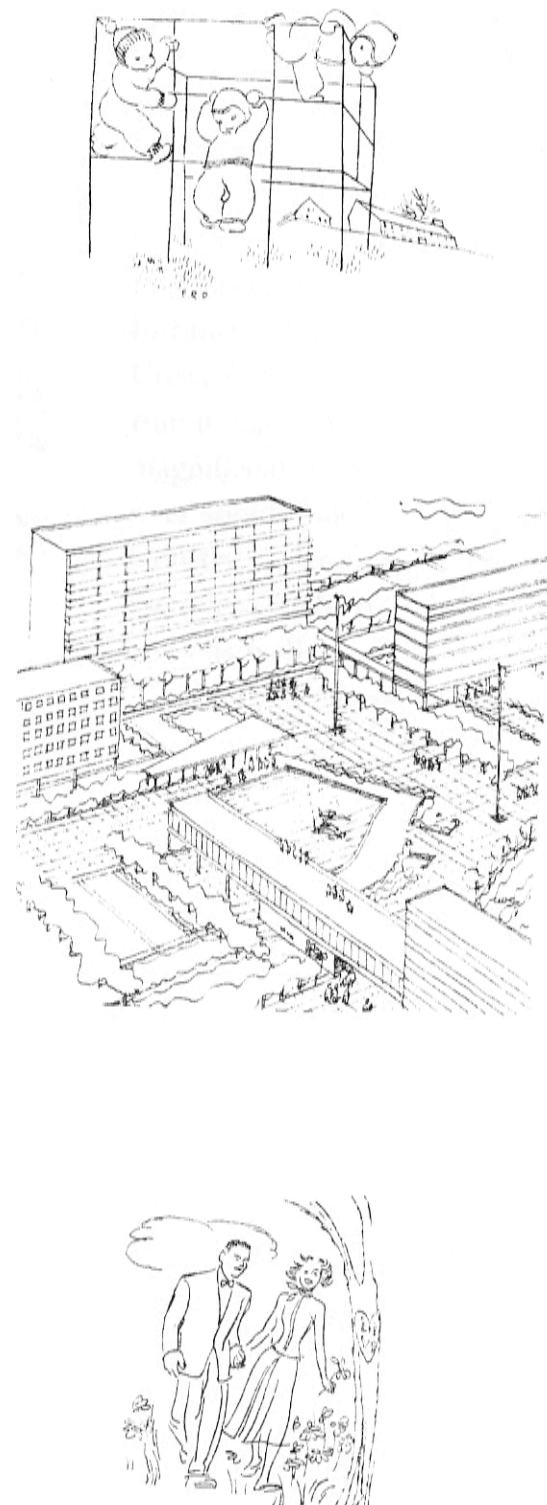
Despite Washington D.C. having the highest percentage of African American residents after the Great Migration, the Washington D.C. of *Of Plans and People* is beholden to a universalized “we” made up exclusively of white, middle-class men and women.³ Quoting architect Henry S. Churchill, the authors defend their embrace of ordered progress, noting that without it, “the boulevard and civic center would be of no greater worth than the slum.”⁴



**Figure 4. American Institute of Architects, *Of Plans and People*, 1950, p21.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**



**Figure 5. American Institute of Architects, *Of Plans and People*, 1950, p22.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**



**Figure 6. American Institute of Architects, *Of Plans and People*, 1950, p23.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

Of Plans and People continues the essence of City Beautiful movements that had been shaping the development of D.C. since the turn of the century. Though the monumental core was already a reality, the report reiterated the idea that Washington D.C. was primed to be an example of the “white city” fit to represent the nation’s ideals. This District of Columbian exposition, like the modernist wonders of the Columbian Exposition at the turn of the century, touted the vibrancy and viability of a city with increasing numbers of low-income African Americans for middle-class white residents.

The potential of the city would be realized by eradicating racialized poverty and its attendant landscapes through modern planning. As Lewis Mumford famously argued, cities are “a work of art” responsible for the maintenance of civilization that must be saved from “ravaged landscapes, disorderly urban districts, pockets of disease, patches of blight” and “mile upon mile of standardized slums.”⁵ The illustrations throughout *Of Plans and People* influence the modernist project of ordering space. This kind of visual rhetoric serves as a conceptual blueprint that informs the material blueprints involved in the shaping of the built environment. By constructing this white visual utopia and claiming that this utopia is “for its people,” *Of Plans and People* erases residents of color from a conversation that shaped the allocation of resources in the development process.

Eighteen years later, in the wake of the civil uprisings of 1968, the national white city seemed like a distant memory. In annual reports for the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA), residents of color were shown almost exclusively. In a 1968 report, black residents are shown literally working together to deliver much-needed supplies to fellow neighbors (Figure 7).⁶ In the 1970 annual report, multiple photos from community planning meetings are shown (Figure 8).⁷ These photos show packed rooms of concerned

citizens of color not only participating in the planning of post-uprising D.C., but often times running the meeting. Despite the RLA's relative ineffectiveness in building a more equitable future for the city's working class residents of color, these images reflect a representational shift in the narratives of planning produced by its key players. The national and local context of civil rights, civil uprisings, ground-up planning approaches, and the war on poverty rendered earlier rhetorical erasures of race and class arcane.

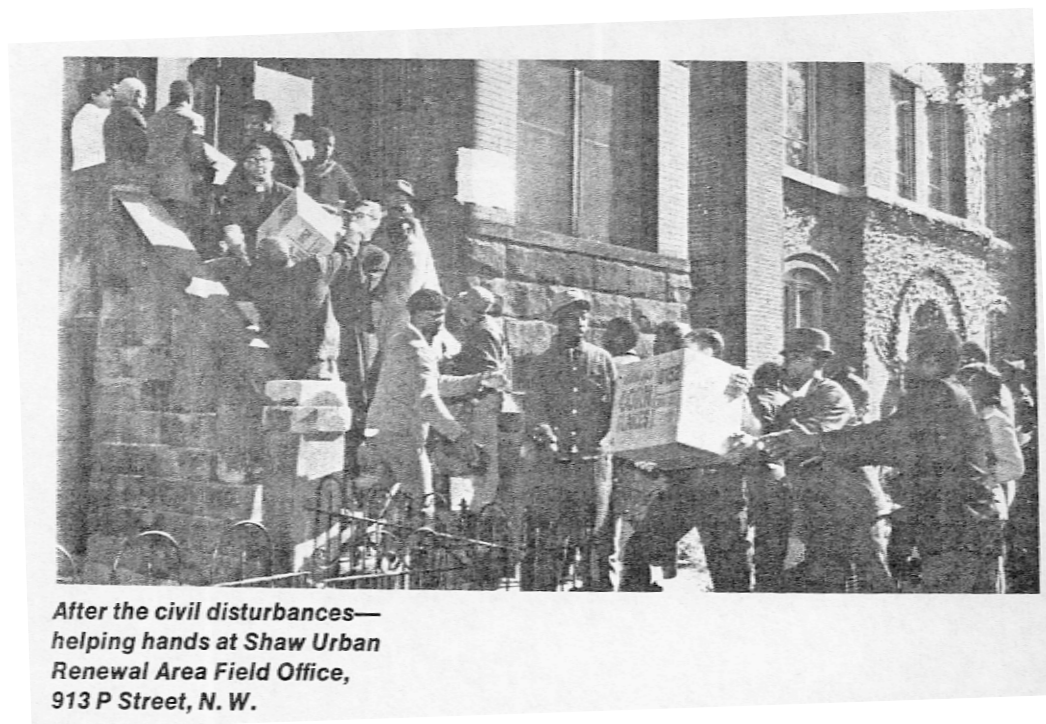


Figure 7. Redevelopment Land Agency, *Annual Report*, 1968.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



the City Council public hearings continued to be held in the neighborhood, resulting in several recommendations which were incorporated into the plan. The City Council

approved the NDP 2 plan on June 25, 1970, but deferred action on several disposition areas for funding and relocation reasons. Federal funds for NDP 2 were approved on July 1, 1970.

Architect Robert J. Nash, of the Reconstruction and Development Corporation, discusses plans with community representatives.

Community members participate in discussion of planning proposals at meeting of Project Area Committee Assembly, Arthur E. Brooks, Chairman.

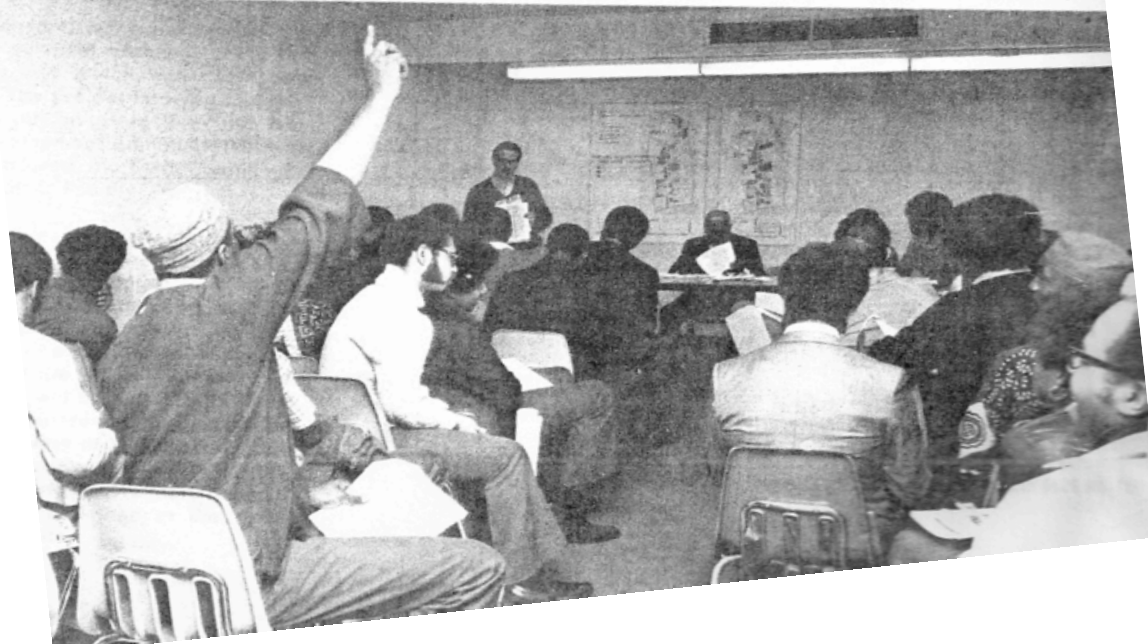


Figure 8. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1970.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

This chapter seeks to explore the structure of planning rhetoric and examine the meanings and legacies it produced. Treating these often ephemeral pamphlets and reports as ideological texts that go beyond the mere description of physical plans reveals how the creative flourishes in these under-studied documents shape how race and class are engaged in the planning process. I combine textual analysis of planning documents with an ethnographic inquiry of Columbia Heights residents who have been living in the neighborhood for at least ten years. This ethnographic component provides an entry point to discuss how residents themselves conceptualized their neighborhood and the development that has taken place over the years.

Not only does this juxtapose the rhetoric with what happened on the ground, it also locates counter-narratives that often challenge the ideological tenets of official rhetoric. Activist organizations continually challenged racist planning strategies, from ephemeral groups such as Build Black- an organization that demanded that black residents be given property to redevelop- to longer lasting groups such as the Model Inner City Community Development Organization (MICCO), which wanted to ensure residents' guided planning decisions.⁸ Furthermore, many residents of color who were not a part of official organizations expressed opposition at planning meetings and through everyday communication with neighbors.

Much of the recent scholarship on planning and the ordering of urban space articulates the ways in which top-down approaches neglect and often erase the experience and needs of working class people of color. While the tactic of erasure has been an integral part of Washington D.C's planning rhetoric in the mid-twentieth century, the active engagement of difference was much more a part of planning rhetoric. In charting

the different phases of planning rhetoric, I illustrate the shift from erasing low-income residents of color to actively engaging with issues of race and class. In fact, discussing and representing race and class marginalization and empowerment was vital to selling official development. Though the terms of engagement vary depending on the period, I argue that the ideological constant is an appropriation of social justice rhetoric (especially that of equality and citizen participation) to obscure stalled development, outright neglect, and an increased focus on upward redistribution. An explicit engagement with social justice was used to forward the direct opposite of the stated goal, namely the continued marginalization of low-income residents of color. This chapter moves focus away from the rubric of erasure to the rubric of neoliberal appropriation.

Much of this appropriation was solidified amidst the War on Poverty. Steven Gregory notes that “the antipoverty program thus served as a kind of institutional wedge between middle-classes and the poor tying the latter as clients to external service bureaucracies rather than to wider, cross-class constituencies and social institutions within the community.”⁹ Though Gregory is primarily concerned with these shifts in New York City, the establishment of a black power elite also took place in Washington, D.C. The official planning rhetoric examined here charts how ideas borne out of radical black power movements were reformed into official state discourse, sometimes by black activists themselves, losing much of their message’s largescale critique in the process.

The planning documents I examine in this chapter primarily fall into two categories: those that champion development that has already taken place and those that propose a development plan. In both cases, the representations of Columbia Heights within their pages are designed to influence. Specifically, these images and stories are

presented to appease residents and attract new investment. Residents or developers do not always take the stories these documents tell about Columbia Heights as fact, but the maps drawn here do have power.

As numerous scholars such as Christine Boyer, Mike Davis, and David Harvey have argued, government officials have an enormous amount of power over the public *and* private development process.¹⁰ In the case of Washington D.C., Congress, the D.C. Office of Planning, the mayoral administration, the zoning board, and the Redevelopment Land Agency have ushered in each planning phase the city has seen. They have decided what kind of money would be given to support what kind of development. They have decided what parcels would be designated as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, giving developers millions of dollars in bonds and tax breaks. They decide how much affordable housing will be allocated and how much upscale development should be encouraged. Even though the material investment that gets buildings built increasingly is provided by private corporations, state institutions have provided the deregulation and subsidies required for the publically sponsored private development that is the hallmark of neoliberal development.

This chapter examines planning documents from a variety of agencies, but I give primacy to literature produced by the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA). Though RLA was a citywide organization, it was almost exclusively responsible for developing parcels abandoned or destroyed during and following the civil uprisings, many of them in Columbia Heights. In many ways, the RLA was the steward of Columbia Heights redevelopment. Their representation of the neighborhood is therefore one of the most influential representations. The RLA reported to private investors what was happening

and what *could* happen in Columbia Heights. Similar to the condominium ads in the next chapter, these representations were sales pitches: official sales pitches to appease residents and attract investors.

The sales pitch, however, often relied on representations that were far from the lived experience of residents. I first examine how narratives surrounding urban renewal initiatives in the 1950s and early 1960s either erased residents of color or framed them as pathological subjects in need of socialization. I then move to the late 1960s and 1970s and the shift to spuriously representing planning as a ground-up enterprise solely led by and for formerly disenfranchised black residents. This shift reflects a long-standing rhetorical investment in citizen participation, a concept that often privileges the participation of qualified citizens as a prerequisite for receiving resources. After examining how the civil uprising and the narratives surrounding it shaped planning rhetoric, I examine the legacy of Marion Barry and his focus on minority participation in the up-market development of downtown Washington, D.C. Finally, I turn to discussions of “diversity” and gentrification in planning literature from the 1990s through the present day, arguing that the selective inclusion of difference has been used to obscure the consequences of recent development.

These planning documents make up the first site of discursive production I analyze. They create specific “maps” of Columbia Heights that often adversely affect longtime working-class and/or residents of color. Whether by erasing low-income people from the ideal city or reciting social justice rhetoric that covered over continued neglect, these documents covered up the state’s role in continued disinvestment. Whether by erasure or by claiming that social justice was already being fought for, city officials were

able to privilege middle and upper-middle class people such as suburban commuters, members of the black professional class, and later residents moving back to the “revitalized” city.

Later in the 1990s and beyond, when Columbia Heights was a viable target for gentrification, planning documents marketed the neighborhood as a multicultural hotspot begging for more upscale development. Furthermore, the representational map of Columbia Heights in planning documents has encouraged uneven development by using specific rhetoric surrounding race, ethnicity, and class.¹¹ Though the engagement with difference has changed over time, its ability to influence the neighborhood has remained.

Given the power of the governmental organizations that produced them, the discourse of these documents is akin to the juridical formations that informed Foucault’s own understanding of discourse.¹² In this case, the RLA and other organizations used representations in planning documents to label who and where was worthy of private and public support in the form of housing, employment, and education. They influence investment decisions and also set the tone for how people conceptualize the neighborhood. The latter effect shapes the built environment in smaller but equally important ways. It shapes who feels they belong and who worries they are being pushed out. It affects who feels comfortable going where. It orders the neighborhood: white people go here, black people can only talk to these people, Latina/os are not safe there, etc. This rhetoric values particular kinds of demographic diversity and devalues others.

To further understand how development has been experienced on the ground, this analysis is tempered by my longtime resident respondents’ opinions and reflections. I interviewed seventeen people of varying racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds.¹³ Each

interview lasted 1-3 hours, guided by some prompt questions (Appendix A). The experience of residents sometimes affirms and sometimes undercuts the ideology in planning rhetoric. To avoid over-estimating the influence of ideology forwarded by city and development corporations, I include residents' own experience with the planning process to see how their reflections challenge and/or reinforce that ideology. Having candid interviews with longtime residents outside the formal channels of charettes and neighborhood meetings counteracts the privileging of exclusionary constructions of the qualified, participating citizen. It also charts how some residents resist, speaking alternative truths that- even by just telling me and neighbors- challenge dominant ideology. It is a form of witnessing that, when uttered, shows the resiliency and resolve longtime residents retain despite fears of displacement.

On a more general level, these conversations examine everyday interactions among residents to see how people interact with neighbors of divergent social locations. Ending with a rumination on the possibilities created through this often tense and often coalitional neighborhood network, I offer potential micro and macro interventions that work against the pervasive appropriation of difference. Ultimately, though planning documents provide critical insight into how difference is used in development processes, the story of a block is a story far richer than the rhetoric.

I have divided the chapter into three sections organized chronologically. Section one examines planning trends from 1950-1968, focusing on how planning documents erased or subjugated residents of color. Section two focuses on 1969-1989, charting the appropriation of social justice rhetoric linked to campaigns and movements for civil rights, black power, and affirmative action. Section three spans 1990-2010, juxtaposing

the rising influence of multicultural ideology with continued uneven development. These periods are not strict. The shifts in dominant ideology began popping up before each period. Rhetoric from older time periods lingered after a new dominant ideology took hold. My chronological division references loosely defined eras. Each contain watershed moments- the civil uprisings, the largescale development of the Metro parcels- but these events did not create paradigm shifts on their own. My use of periodization categorizes general changes, but it is not meant to construct eras rigidly defined by a particular trend in planning rhetoric.

Section One: 1950-1968

Curing Cancer in the White City: Urban Renewal in the 1950s

Though this chapter is primarily focused on representations in planning literature from the onset of Johnson's War on Poverty through the civil uprisings and into late 20th and early 21st century planning, I contextualize later trends by examining how race and class were represented in earlier literature. As illustrated in *Of Plans and People*, planning literature in the 1950s and 1960s often erased residents of color in favor of constructing Washington D.C. as a white utopia. In the National Capital Planning Commission's *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000*, the future is marked by technological advancement, a shift of focus and resources to the suburbs, and the overwhelming presence of white people. In these illustrations, the presence of white bodies alongside flying cars and space-age attire connects progress with the triumph of whiteness (Figures 9, 10)¹⁴. The city of the future is the white city. These images also mark the move from conceptualizing Washington D.C. as a city with growing suburbs to a metropolitan

framework that poured resources into the larger metropolitan area, often at the expense of the center city and its working-class residents of color.

The white suburb is the vision of the future, a marker of progress that implicitly associates the center city as a fading, increasingly arcane space not worthy of investment. Creating this system of space, race, and class-based value encourages development trends like highway construction, suburban growth, and slum clearance. In essence, these plans work to normalize the hierarchies of race and class that disproportionately delivered resources to middle and upper-middle class whites.

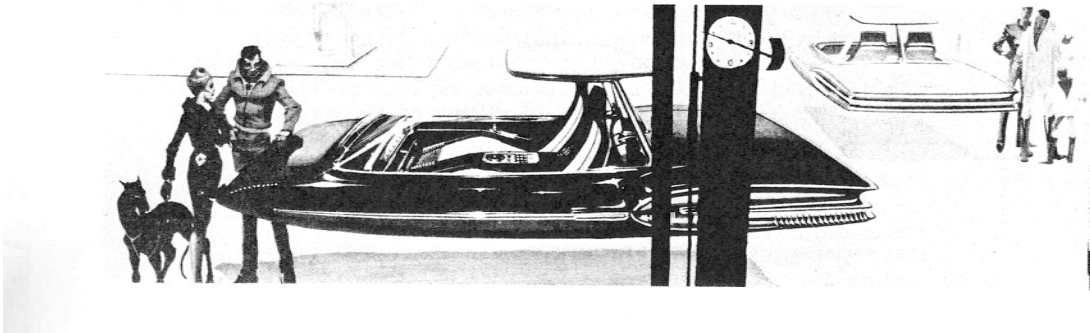


Figure 9. National Capital Planning Commission, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000*, 1961.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

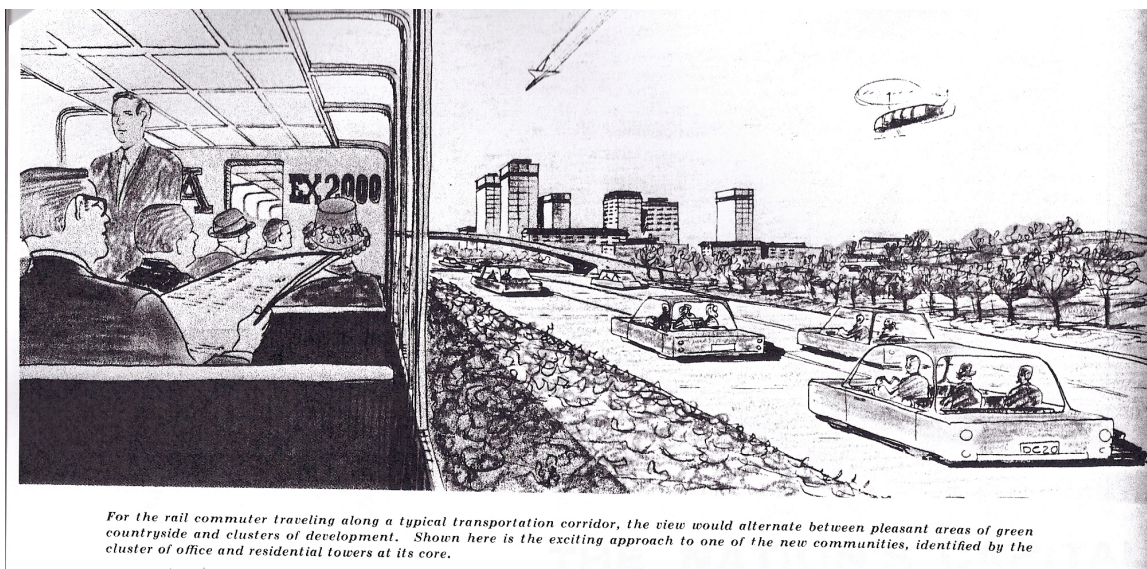
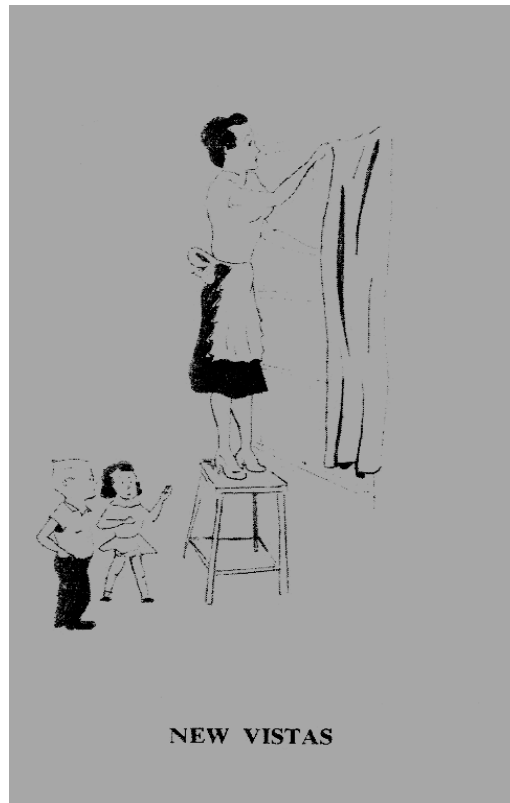


Figure 10. National Capital Planning Commission, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000*, 1961.

(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

In the RLA's 1955 annual report, a cartoon sketch similar to those in *Of Plans and People* shows a white housewife hanging drapes above text that details the relocation process surrounding the urban renewal of Southwest (Figure 11)¹⁵. The displaced residents of Southwest, however, were overwhelming black and working class. In addition to the literal displacement wrought through urban renewal, the image erases black residents at the representational level, implying that urban renewal was merely the jovial relocation of white, middle-class families to "new vistas."



**Figure 11. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1955.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

Urban renewal was the most visible and largescale approach to development and the RLA's annual reports were predominantly focused on detailing the slum clearance and rebuilding of Southwest. Because of the project's scale and its adverse affect on the thousands of residents displaced in the process, reporting about urban renewal was also about selling urban renewal as an ideal development approach. Juxtaposition was continually used to stigmatize low-income residents' enclaves, creating a kind of "beauty and the beast" trope used to justify slum clearance. In the 1953 RLA report, the majestic dome of the Capitol is seen in the shadow of slum housing (Figure 12)¹⁶. Though the photo is in line with earlier Progressive moves to link City Beautiful ideas to social programs, in the context of a justification of slum clearance, the visual hammers home

the idea that slums are incongruous to American ideals and should be eradicated. The follow up question about how to help those in slums seems secondary to their eradication. As evidenced in the influential 1955 report to the D.C. Commissioners, *No Slums in Ten Years*, the removal of slums is framed in terms of “elimination,” “cure,” and “surgery” rather than in terms of rehabilitation and relocation.¹⁷ The medicalized language formulates slums and their residents as a disease and disease is not something that is gingerly aided. It is something to be obliterated. This focus on removal with anemic regard to low-income residents’ futures leads to the disappearing of low-income residents of color: out of frame, out of mind.

“Before and after” imagery was also used as a trope to normalize erasure of residents of color, showing exciting reveals of the “new” Southwest. The imagery illustrates the successful integration of proper, middle-class white subjects in an urban landscape once populated with racialized deviance. As critics questioned the negligible relocation efforts for residents of color, the RLA responded with strong visual images hard to argue with.

In a 1962 spread, we see a full-page photo of Southwest as it was- debris amidst dilapidated buildings- and a photo of Southwest as it is (Figures 13, 14).¹⁸ The pictures also tell an implicit story of racial imperialism. Southwest as it was had African American residents, slouched down and implicated within the mise en scene of squalor. Southwest as it is the height of modern sophistication and the black bodies are nowhere in view.

In a 1962 photo of a new Southwest apartment complex, we see the “pioneers of River Park Cooperative” (Figure 15).¹⁹ The photo assures the viewer that Southwest is

now a place where children can be safe and happy. The use of children also deflects from the war of territory waged by developers while reinscribing the narrative of colonization: these cute white children are the pioneers of a space once home to hundreds of poor and working-class residents of color. As symbols of the future, these children tell a powerful story about what Southwest will ideally become now that these pioneers have settled. As geographer Neil Smith argues, this language of the frontier has consistently been used in inequitable development to frame newcomers as civilizing agents of change and rhetorically construct neighborhoods of color as undeveloped space waiting to be settled.²⁰

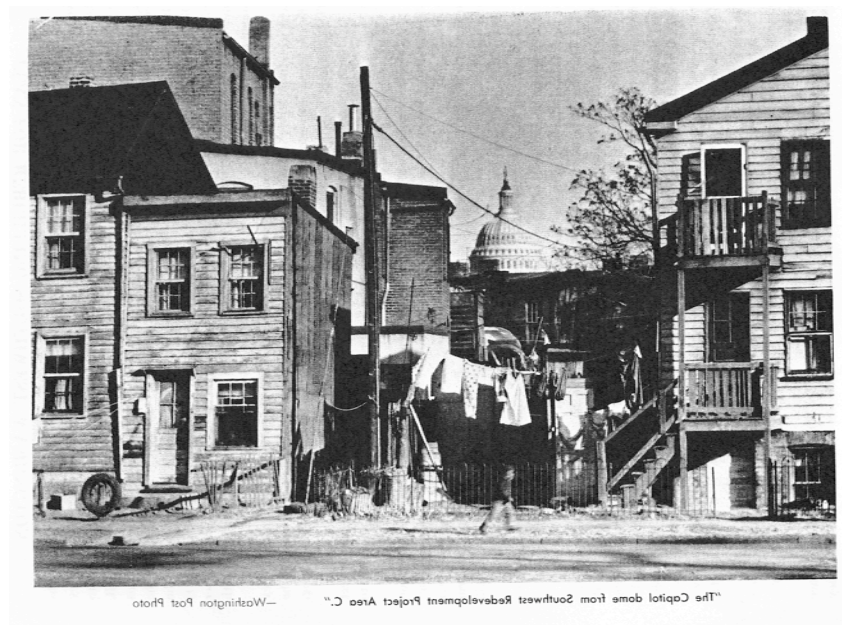


Figure 12. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

SOUTHWEST AS IT WAS



DO YOU REMEMBER DIXON'S COURT?

**Figure 13. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, p4.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

SOUTHWEST AS IT IS



TOWN CENTER PLAZA WEST

Figure 14. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, p5.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



The Urban Renewal Plan for the Southwest provides for a preponderance of residential areas
Figure 15. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, p10.
 (Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

Though the visual erasure of black residents continued to be a dominating trope throughout this period, black residents were occasionally shown in planning documents. When they did appear, they were shown as properly socialized subjects representing a successful transformation from pathological slum dweller to model of the white middle-class ideal, all thanks to the tireless efforts of white urban planners. These visual representations of black residents fit firmly within a framework of pathology, focusing on the importance of teaching low-income black residents hygiene and home maintenance without regard to the systemic causes of oppressive poverty. As Steven Gregory notes in

his study of collective activism within low-income urban communities, “this discourse of inner-city pathology, popularized in the mass media, depoliticized the problem of black poverty and related social inequalities by locating their origins in the moral economy of the isolated ‘ghetto’ household, rather than in the political economy of the greater society.”²¹ When planning documents did include a reference to social programs aimed at improving low-income residents of colors’ lives, the intervention was relegated to changing deviant behavior rather than redressing inequitable resource allocation.

In a *Washington Post* editorial cartoon reprinted in the RLA’s 1954 annual report, white men representing governmental and civilian D.C. are shown forcing the literal tangle of pathology to submit (Figure 16).²² The cartoon reclaims white-collar work as the pinnacle of rugged, white masculinity. Furthermore, the cartoon reiterates that the work of urban renewal was primarily an act of violent displacement rather than culturally sensitive social welfare: the white men are angrily approaching the slums ready to saw them down and replace them with a tree of their own making. That this cartoon appeared among other positive press reports about the RLA’s work throughout the year illustrates officials’ core faith in aggressive, top-down approaches to “help” quell racialized deviance.

Later in the same report, before and after imagery is used to convey just how far the transformation of slum dwellers had come. In a full, two-page spread with the captions “from this” and “to this” on the opposite page, photos reveal the squalor of low-income residents’ homes juxtaposed with the bright and modern amenities of their new housing (Figures 17,18)²³. On the left hand side we see interiors riddled with garbage, debris, grime, and outdated technology such as a wood burning stove. Though these

photos convey the material effect of poverty vis a vis outdated amenities, they also focus on disorder. The photos seem to imply that perhaps the worst thing about slum housing is that its residents cannot seem to keep it clean or organized.



Figure 16. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, p6.
(Courtesy of Washingtonian Division, DC Public Library)



FROM THIS

**Figure 17. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, p14.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

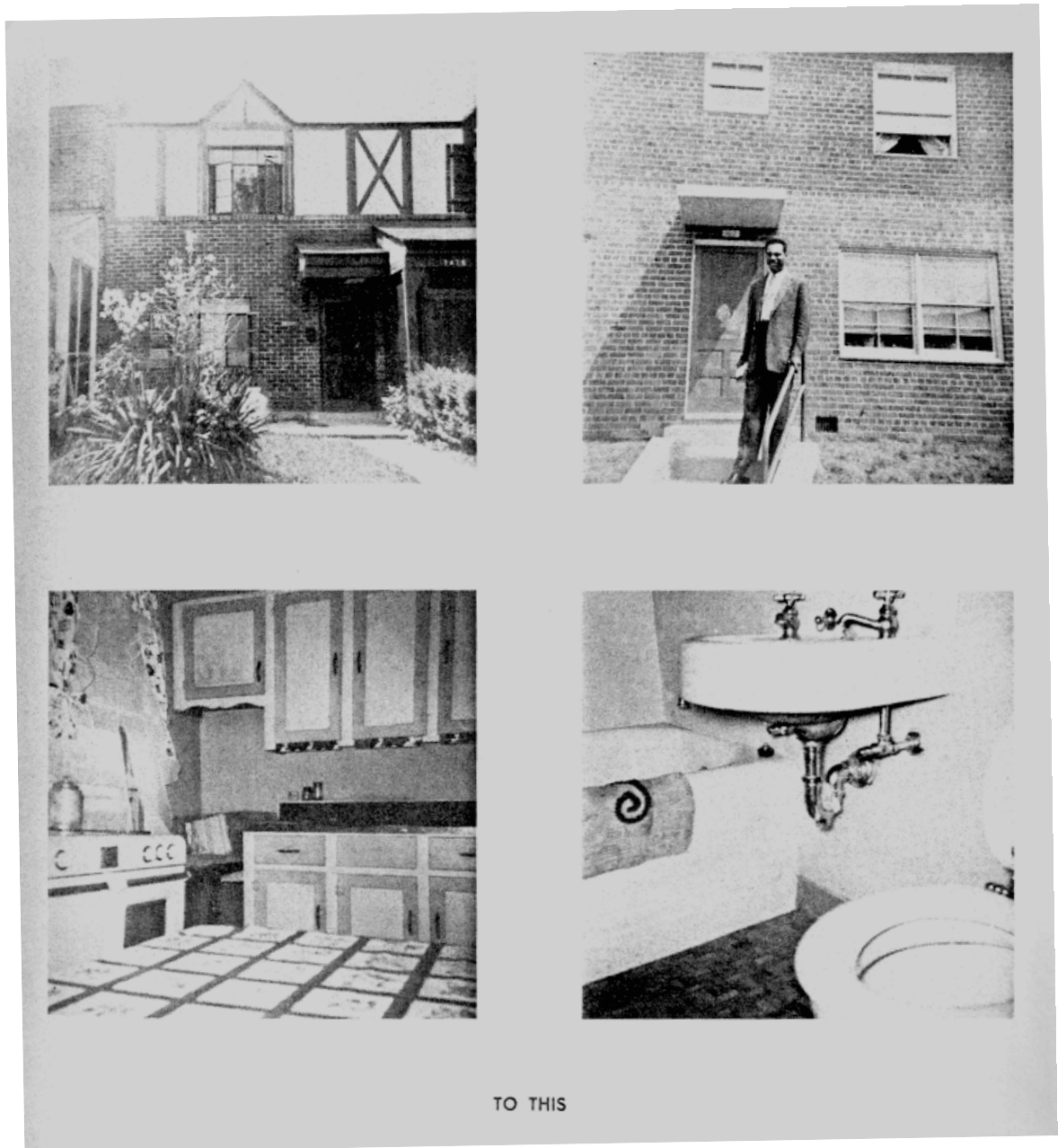


Figure 18. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, p15.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

On the “to this” section we see the exterior of a suburban-style home and a modern apartment building. Interiors reveal spacious and organized kitchens and spotless bathrooms with the latest fixtures. A black man is shown outside the apartment exterior

dressed in a slacks and a blazer smiling proudly. Armed with the generous help of the RLA, this man stands forth as a cleaned up and responsible success story. The intervening actions between “from this” and “to this” involve material aid, but the photo spread uses the “before and after” approach to tell a visual story that drives home the theme of chaos to order.

In the RLA’s 1960 annual report, a brief article titled “families want good housing” details the condition of “slum dwellers” and how they can be successfully saved by city planning officials. The narrative begins on an empathic note: “slum dwellers, like Americans everywhere, are tied to their community, to their family and friends, to their church and the friendly neighborhood store.” The author goes on to explain that the primary problem is that “these people are aware of the misery and poverty which surrounds them. But years or a lifetime of slum living frequently has dulled their sensibilities.” The solution? “Often, the slum dweller must be educated to the value of good housing and made to understand that at last a decent dwelling is available to him.”²⁴ In other words, it is the responsibility of the RLA to teach low-income residents what is best for them.

Channeling the imperialist notion of the ignorant savage in need of socialization, this approach makes the plight of low-income residents of color visible, but frames it in a way that denies the role of systemic oppression and robs the rhetoric’s subjects of any agency. This article reflects and reinforces the growing idea that poverty was caused by familial dysfunction, the cornerstone of the eventual “War on Poverty.” Though these stories reflect aid given to low-income residents, they reinforce ideas about low-income people that will bolster the rapid decrease of social welfare. As soon as the cause of

poverty was wrongly established as familial dysfunction- and specifically the deficiency of low-income black women- rather than economic and racial oppression, the gradual disinvestment in housing and job training programs could be justified. Images such as these perpetuate the transition from providing for low-income residents despite their deficiencies to expecting low-income people to help themselves.

In this story, there is a hefty tradeoff: to receive limited social welfare, residents must agree to be socialized as proper capitalist, heteronormative subjects of the state. Even then, the language implies that low-income residents will never be truly equal or superior to those at the RLA providing their charity. Help is only available for the deserving poor. “Problem families” who are too excessive in size, who live in common law marriages, or who are not patient enough to wait for housing to be given to them will lose out on this charitable program. The success story of Mr. and Mrs. “H” represents the ideal trajectory. After becoming a ‘hapless man’ unable to feed his family, Mr. H ushered in a period of destitution marked by a “dirty, rundown, and rat-infested” dwelling. After successful relocation they are on the “path towards self-sufficiency”: Mr. H found secure employment while Mrs. H. “takes faithful care of her children and home.” As Mrs. H. exclaims, “for the first time in my life I am really living.”²⁵ Social welfare remains limited to those willing to subscribe to the state’s assumption that restoring nuclear heterosexual family is the key to solving systemic poverty.²⁶

These case studies include the sympathetic inclusion of low-income residents of color which does mark a difference in earlier planning rhetoric that relied on out-and-out erasure. The narratives, however, rob these residents of any agency, both denying they had meaningful lives before urban renewal and framing charity as an act of goodwill

rather than redressing. Though social control has always been built into the function of charity, it is useful to examine these urban renewal-era documents in the context of planning rhetoric that would seemingly change radically in a little over a decade. As civil rights and black power movements became stronger and more visible, planning rhetoric incorporated the language of equality and empowerment. Additionally, the power of planning was rhetorically placed in the hands of certain black residents. Ideologies of social pathology would continue through this period, but this ideology was supplemented with a new engagement with racial and class oppression.

Organized Chaos: the Politics of 1968's Civil Uprisings

In order to understand the change in planning rhetoric that came in the late 1960s and 1970s, it is important to understand the watershed event that catalyzed shifting conceptions of the urban development process: the civil uprisings following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. Despite the fact that Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination was the event that sparked the uprising, the uprisings represented longstanding outrage over economic and cultural marginalization, neglect, and discrimination. The three epicenters of the conflict were the 14th street corridor (which includes present day Columbia Heights and the historic black cultural center, U street), the nearby Shaw neighborhood, and the H street corridor in Northeast. Both neighborhoods were bustling, predominantly black working-class neighborhoods home to a strong network of residents even amidst widespread lack of resources. The five days of targeted property destruction, resistance to police and national guard, and looting were the result of decades of job discrimination, terminal unemployment, unfair housing

practices, discrimination, surveillance in area stores, and a lack of substantive support from local and federal programs.

Local governmental narratives of the “riots” in future planning documents illustrate how the civil uprisings were stripped of their larger political context.²⁷ One such example is the report released in 1978 by mayor Walter E. Washington. Titled *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968: A Decade of Progress for the District of Columbia*, the report uses the temporal distance from the event to construct a historical narrative that follows a modernist trajectory of chaos to order. The front cover and inside page use the tried and true “before and after” trope to convey the horror of the civil disturbances and subsequent progress (Figures 19, 20).²⁸ The front cover of the report also uses another popular trope: the use of children’s imagery to frame the rhetoric as innocent and veracious.

Side by side drawings from a D.C. elementary school child depict the riots of “yesterday,” showing gnarled pockets of flames, broken glass, and men shooting and beating one another. The picture of “tomorrow” shows new highrises and homes with two women diligently walking down the street unmolested.²⁹ The pictures highlight the tragedy and wrong-headedness of the civil disturbances, representing them as something that traumatized children rather than something that was an outgrowth of sustained oppression. The first page of the report shows a similar before and after photo set, showing the smoke-filled streets of April, 1968 with the new (unidentified) landscape of D.C. titled “streets for people” (Figure 20). Here, the report shows the triumph of redevelopment and the importance of catering that redevelopment to residents, a theme integral to planning rhetoric slightly before and after 1968.

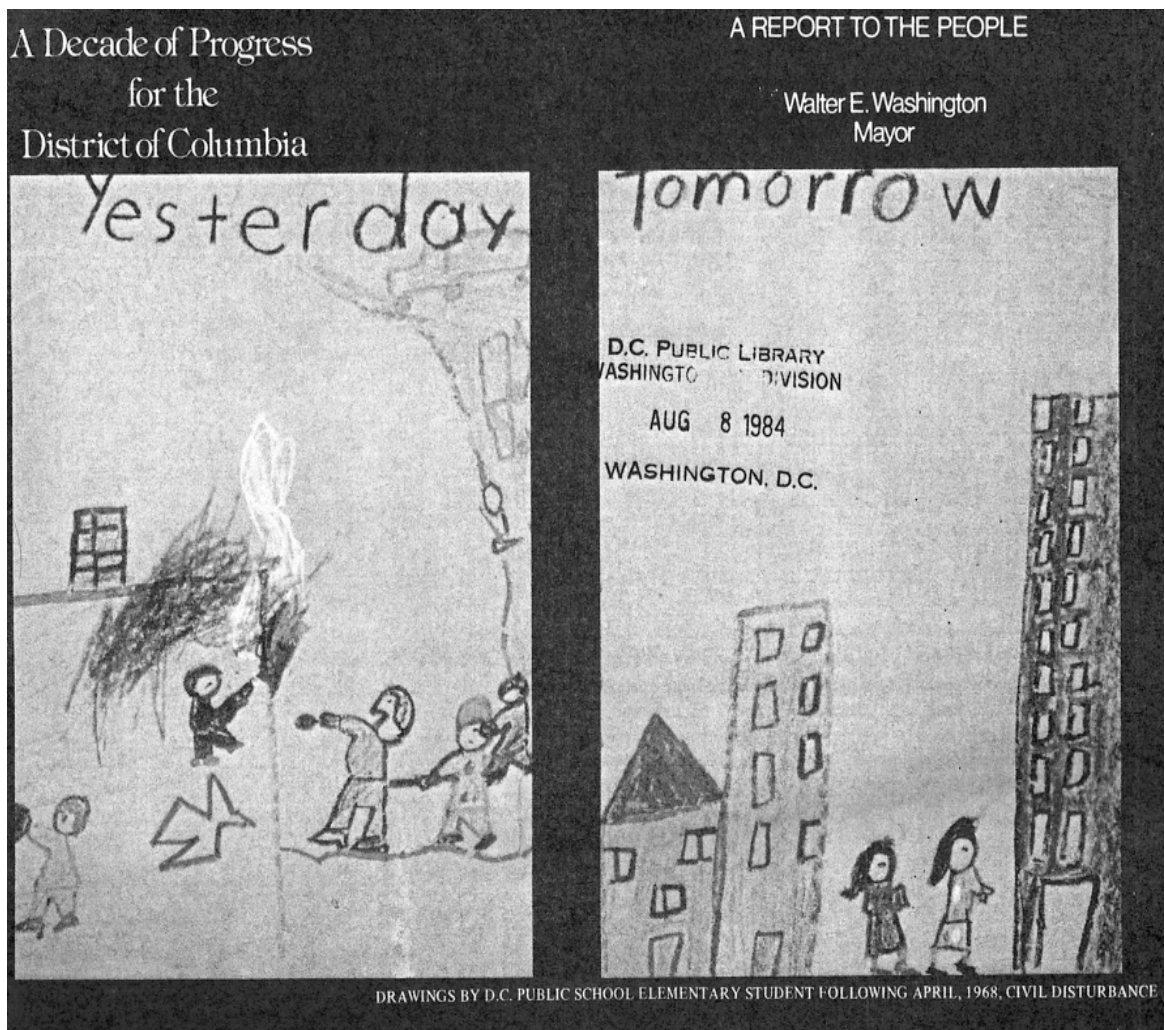
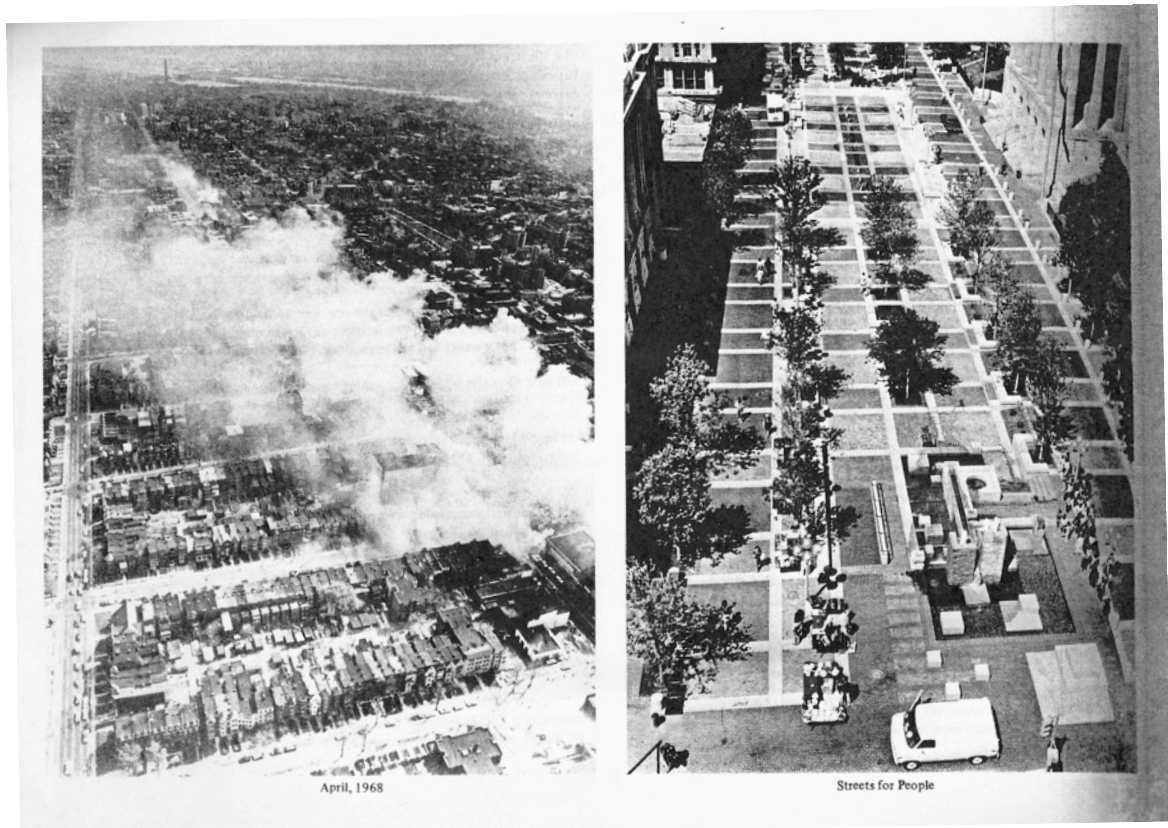


Figure 19. Walter E. Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, 1978, Front Cover. (Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



**Figure 20. Walter E. Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968, 1978*, Inside Front Cover.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

The mayoral report opens by dramatically explaining the cause of the riots: “an Assassins’ rifle shot in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, echoed across 120 American cities, including the District of Columbia.” Washington D.C. “felt the anger generated by the violent death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and experienced three days of destructive rioting.”³⁰ Though the assassination was certainly the catalyst for the event, this retelling denies both the long-term systemic oppression that led to the rioting and the local responsibility for said oppression. In fact, the civil uprisings in Washington D.C. had mirrored similar racially-motivated uprisings in Detroit, Newark, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles in the previous three years.³¹ Allowing the riots to be an extreme reaction to MLK’s death paints those involved as overly-hostile and impractical. In this

equation, they would have been attacking a city that had little to do with the death of Martin Luther King.

That narrative does not reflect what actually happened: an uprising caused by national and local incidents of oppression. As *Washington Post* reporter Ben Gilbert's interviews with rioters show, even the "senseless" destruction was often times politically savvy: those involved overwhelmingly targeted local white-owned businesses known for discrimination and often used the event as an opportunity to "loot" what they felt was owed to them because of economic neglect from the government, job discrimination, historic price-gauging and surveillance.³² Some black-owned businesses escaped destruction. "Soul brother" was written on windows in a sign of solidarity, protecting the business but also revealing that certain businesses were being specifically targeted by those involved in the uprising.³³

The narrative of *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968* tells a much different story about the government's role in advocating economic and cultural equity for black residents. The report argues that the local D.C. government, who were moving towards Home Rule, had "just accepted the responsibilities of that government when the tragic death of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. occurred April 4, 1968."³⁴ In other words, everything was going orderly and successful until wrong-headed residents took up arms against the system. The narrative at times acknowledges that the lesson of the "civil disturbances" was to listen more carefully to residents' needs and concerns.³⁵ Juxtaposed with a rhetorical indictment and patronization of residents involved, however, the local government is able to come off as a benevolent force. Despite being hampered by

misguided residents, they were still able to adapt and serve their constituents honorably in the aftermath.

By transforming acts of political violence into chaos, narratives of the riots effectively paint everyday residents as disorganized, unable to plan their own communities, and apolitical. All of this imagery discredits resistance efforts and frames low-income residents as unworthy of quality redevelopment. The first step in reclaiming the history of the riots is to counter the assumption that they were not political. In talking to my respondents who grew up in the aftermath of the uprisings, their political meaning became clear.

Although many said that that approach was ultimately more destructive than slower, nonviolent approaches, most did frame them as political events. Rachel, a forty-something black lawyer, has lived in Columbia Heights for a little over ten years but grew up spending time with family in the adjacent Petworth neighborhood. She pointed to the riots as a primary obstacle in getting congressional approval for development.³⁶ She viewed the denials as a punishment for black, working-class resistance. “They couldn’t always raise bonds,” she explains, “and that was racism, OK? That was: ‘oh you want to do the riots thing? You want to keep electing Marion Barry? We’ll fix you. We’ll starve you to death.’ The investors were not going to come in. It was: ‘if you think you’re doing a Nat Turner rebellion riot, here’s the cost for it.’” Though Rachel tells me that her childhood was “very scarred by the riots,” she knows that the riots were a political action at the very least evidenced by the punitive stalls in development that kept the neighborhood down for the decades following the uprisings.

James, a black, retired cook in his late 60s, has been living in Columbia Heights most of his life. He resented the riots and subsequent Black Power tactics that represented a shift away from the non-violent strategies of Martin Luther King Jr. Charting the changes in the neighborhood he says:

A change started. Back in the 50s and early 60s... but after Martin Luther King, the '68 riots, he was a non-violent man. They didn't have nothing like that. No crime like that. No black on black crime. Just like a change is going to come. Right now with the economy like that, no jobs, and this and that you know, it's like I said, every time you turn on the radio or TV you see somebody getting killed. You're not safe in your own home no more. The change came after the '68 riot, and this Black Power stuff; all this kind of stuff.

James resents the move away from nonviolence into more aggressive strategies, but he acknowledges that the shift came with the riots and that the riots were in fact representative of a political strategy.

Section Two: 1969-1989

From Erasure to Exposure: The Rhetoric of Black Bodies

Despite planning rhetoric's lack of acknowledgement that the civil uprisings were a manifestation of resistance to policies of neglect and exclusion, rhetoric about planning changed radically in the late 1960s to include rhetoric of black power, leadership and social justice. This change began before the civil uprisings took place, so I do not argue that the events of 1968 solely caused the shift. The change, however, became solidified in the aftermath of the civil uprisings, especially because the damage inflicted set off a slew of planning debates about how to rebuild. Though I periodize this shift from 1969 onward, I also discuss the nascent representations of black leadership in planning literature in the years immediately preceding the uprisings. I argue that the uprisings were

the strongest example of a changing tide of frustration and agency that came out of a context of national and local civil rights activism (D.C. in many ways being the nexus of both) and local pushes for Home Rule. The civil uprisings cemented the shift from the erasure of working class black residents to rhetoric of inclusion and ground-up development strategies. In addition to the necessity of addressing the ideological social justice issues brought to the forefront because of the uprisings, the destruction of large swaths of the built environment necessarily spurred talk of redevelopment.

The shift in planning rhetoric at this time also reflected the Johnson-era national trend towards inclusionary planning ideology built on progressive ideals of equality and citizen participation. This new strain of urban planning created unprecedented partnerships between city officials, local interest groups, and residents. This is not an indictment of the ideological shift towards social justice, but my analysis of how this rhetoric was forwarded and how it compared to the actual development process illustrates the ways in which social justice rhetoric can obscure the far more inequitable reality. The rhetoric of racial and class equality was integral to selling a development process scarred by top-down power structures, privatization, grievous inaction, and eventual upward redistribution. This approach should also be viewed in the context of Johnson's "War on Poverty," a campaign that provided unprecedented federal funds to "combat" urban poverty, but one that reinforced the idea that poverty would be solved by fixing perceived pathology rather than dismantling racist, classist structures.

This engagement with race and class is distinct from later neoliberal appropriation of superficial difference. I argue that D.C. planning documents often *did* address systemic oppression. The problem lies in the disconnect between the rhetoric

used to appease working-class residents and/or residents of color and the reality of stalled and uneven development. I am not arguing that those responsible for the shift to inclusionary, social justice rhetoric were all committed to duping residents. However, the rhetoric of social justice often never got beyond the stage of rhetoric. In this phase of planning literature, the rhetoric of social justice was coopted to appease low-income residents of color while allowing the state to continue a planning agenda that neglected them.

Before examining documents produced by official planning offices such as the RLA, I provide an example of radical planning documents being produced by non-governmental organizations to illustrate the potential of inclusive planning. Though not centered in Columbia Heights, MICCO (Model Inner City Community Organization Inc.) was an organization devoted to developing the Northwest neighborhood of Shaw (also affected by the uprisings). It was created by Reverend Walter Fountroy as direct opposition to the kind of urban renewal that took place in Southwest. Fauntroy famously called the process “negro removal,” echoing many residents’ growing outrage over widespread displacement and development focused on middle and upper-middle-class (often white) residents and workers. In their pamphlet *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?* which explains the result of their community surveys, they state the mission of the organization:

MICCO was formed to make sure that Shaw will be rebuilt to suit the people who live and work here now. It is a group of Shaw residents and organizations. We mean to see to it that when Renewal is over you can continue to live in Shaw in the kind of neighborhood you want, with services you need, with rents you can afford to pay.³⁷

In addition to fairly standard goals such as providing affordable housing and amenities, the mission statement also explicitly states these should be primarily available for “the people who live and work here now,” a bold denial of previous displacement-centric urban renewal and burgeoning gentrification concerns.

The images in *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?* also reinforce the focus on Shaw’s primarily black, working-class residents. One illustration shows a professionally dressed black couple waiting in a palatial new Metrorail station (Figure 21).³⁸ The image revises what was and would continue to be a public transit development process that excluded working class residents of color in every arena: from construction employment to displacement under eminent domain to disproportionately short and delayed line routing and construction in predominantly black, working-class neighborhoods.

In another section, an image shows a group of young black men congregating under a streetlight (Figure 22).³⁹ It recognizes and agrees with residents that these informal “activity centers” where neighbors meet to socialize should be kept. This is a far cry from the dominant, pathologizing rhetoric of loitering street toughs that criminalized public socializing among black youths. The imagery again reclaims public space for black residents, decriminalizing it and them while also providing a truly ground-up suggestion for neighborhood development.

MICCO had a longstanding relationship with city planners and the utopic impulses in their rhetoric can be seen as an influence in official planning documents. Despite the city’s eventual failure to bring these plans to life, the representational utopia created by MICCO was a starting off point for something residents actively tried to make

a reality. MICCO's influence, however, was short lived. By 1972 the Redevelopment Land Authority had cut all ties with the organization in favor of a streamlined, top-down approach to rebuilding.

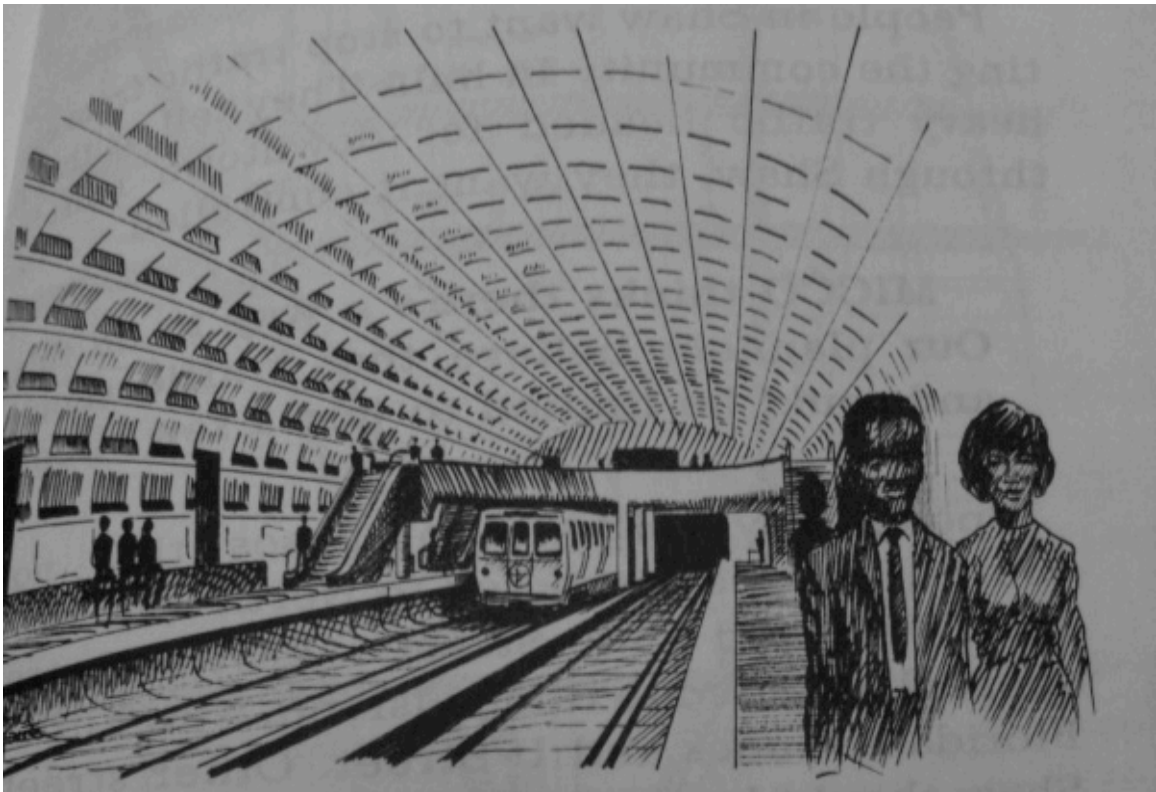


Figure 21. Model Inner City Community Organization, *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?*, 1968.

(Courtesy of the Gelman Library Special Collections, George Washington University)

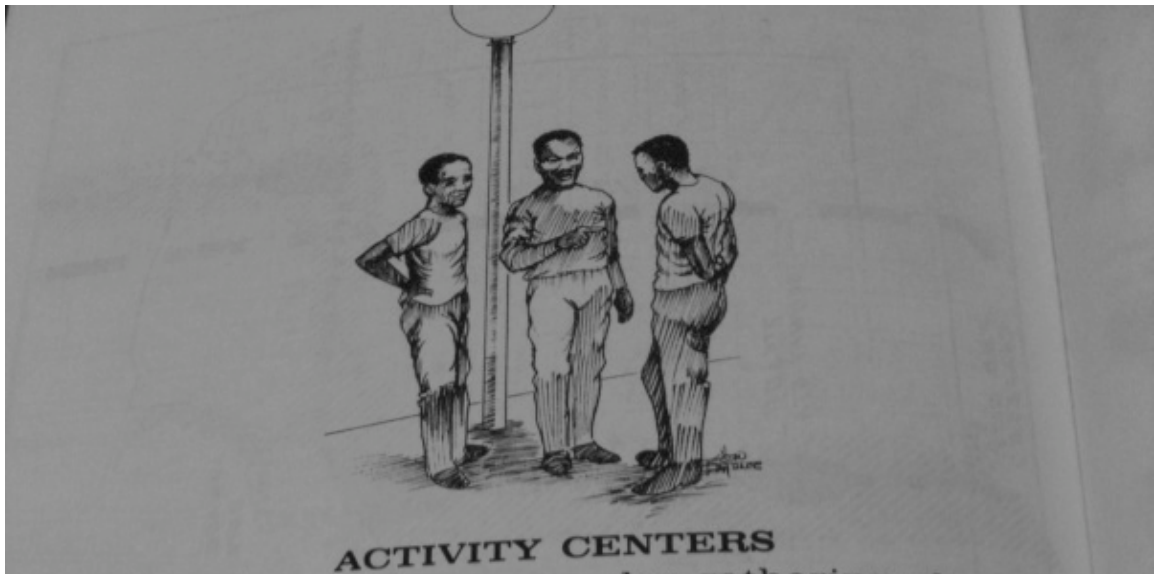


Figure 22. Model Inner City Community Organization, *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?*, 1968.
(Courtesy of the Gelman Library Special Collections, George Washington University)

The Redevelopment Land Authority, now exclusively responsible for the development of lots damaged by the uprisings and neglect, was charged with heeding residents' concerns and desires in a way that it never had before. From 1967 onward, they started to prove their commitment to working-class residents of color. That commitment, however, obscured the RLA's investment in top-down approaches to planning that did not listen to residents and resident-formed organizations like MICCO. As seen from their eventual separation from MICCO, their commitment to inclusive planning and citizen participation was often for show.

The inclusionary rhetoric forwarded by the RLA was partially a result of the organization's demographics. The RLA was not an exclusively white organization. Though specific demographic statistics are unavailable, the photos and reports reveal that the RLA did have some professional-class African Americans in leadership positions. Black leadership was a key component in the post-civil uprising moment in Washington,

D.C. and elsewhere.⁴⁰ This fact, however, did not automatically translate into an increased governmental investment in providing resources to low-income residents of color.

As was the case with the RLA and later with Marion Barry's administration, social justice rhetoric was sometimes used by black politicians to garner political support. That rhetoric often covered up continued neglect. Black leaders publicly committing support to black residents was a potentially empowering move, ending the racist erasures and pathologization that were hallmarks of earlier planning logic. Pledging support curried political favor and advanced black politician's careers, but I argue that the authenticity black leaders and their message lent was instrumental in letting uneven development continue unmolested.

During this period, the photos within RLA annual reports almost exclusively contained black people. In the 1969 report, black children and a black woman are shown enjoying an interim park built in the H Street corridor ravaged by the civil uprisings (Figure 23).⁴¹ Later in the report, black construction workers are shown hard at work building said park (Figure 24).⁴² As shown at the opening of this chapter, the 1970 report illustrates multiple community meetings being led and attended by black residents in the 14th street area (Figure 8). In the 1971 annual report, mostly black members of the 14th Street Project Area Committee Assembly are shown meeting with RLA staff members (Figure 25).⁴³ A photo in that report also captures a room full of black residents actively engaged at a Northeast Project Area Committee meeting (Figure 26). More than a visual shift to *include* residents of color, these photos show a shift from showing very few residents of color to showing almost all residents of color.



Interim park provides pleasant bus



Figure 23. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



H Street, N.E.—At work at interim park.

Northwest One—Skilled heavy equipment operator excavates soil for National Medical Association's nursing home and community health facility at First and K Streets, N.W.



Figure 24. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



Figure 25. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1971.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



**Figure 26. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1971.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

In addition to the sheer representational presence of residents of color, imagery shifted from the trope of the white savior to a model of black residents helping one another. For example, a photo from 1960 RLA annual report shows a white doctor helping a black girl (Figure 27).⁴⁴ In 1972, we see similar photos of doctors helping area residents (Figure 28).⁴⁵ The doctors in these photos, however, are also people of color. These photos represent a rhetorical commitment to ground-up social services orchestrated by residents of color.



Free Polio Shot

**Figure 27. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1960, p24.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

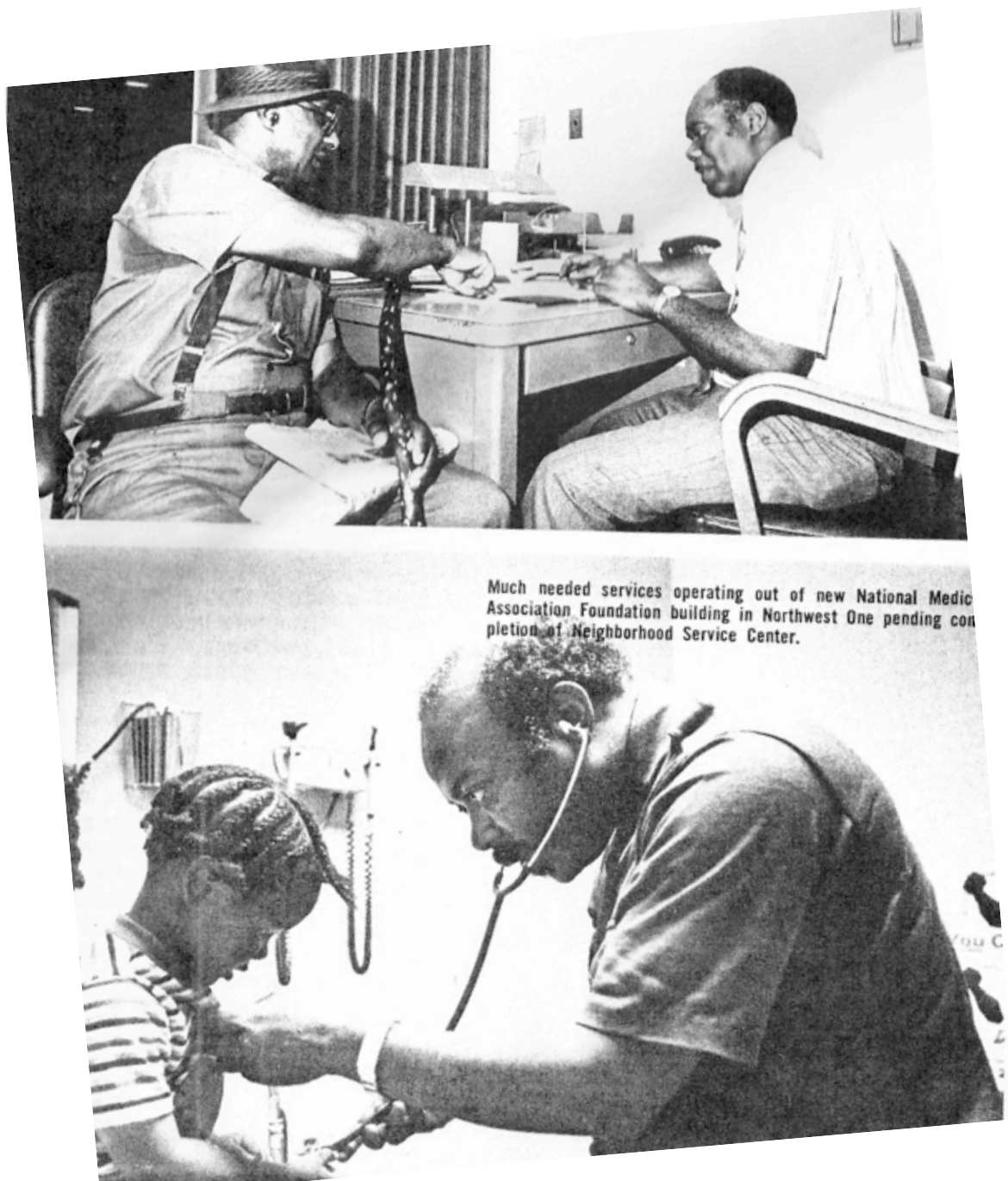


Figure 28. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1972, p11.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

On a more basic level, they advocate the need for the government to provide these social services to their citizens regardless of race or class. Building social service networks became paramount in disinvested neighborhoods. Areas affected by the uprisings such as Columbia Heights were being illustrated as communities of color deserving of governmental support. In the citywide *Workable Program for Community Improvement* published by the D.C. government in 1971, the “requirement” listed for planning and programming is to “help overcome the major physical, social, racial, and economic problems of the slum and blighted areas within the community.”⁴⁶ Despite the fact that this language draws on pathologizing rhetoric about the “slum,” concerns about racism and economic marginalization were being placed at the forefront of planning rhetoric like never before.

In mayor Walter E. Washington’s *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, access to good schools, hospitals, grocery stores and even Affirmative Action programs are explicitly labeled as “human rights.”⁴⁷ Accompanying a long list of health and welfare offices operating or planned in Columbia Heights, a photo shows a black woman and young boy walking the streets of Columbia Heights with the new community health center standing tall in the background (Figure 29).⁴⁸ These documents at times created powerful images of empowerment. They did not shy away from the realities of inequality that needed to be redressed.



**Figure 29. Walter E. Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, 1970, p32.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

It is unclear whether or not these photos were candid or were staged. It can be reasonably assumed that some are staged and some are candid (especially the action shots of community meetings.) But the authenticity of the images is of secondary importance. Either way, they create aspirational landscapes that reinforce a particular ideology. Like the MICCO illustrations, they validate a city in which black working class residents are not only provided for, but are in charge of that social service allocation as well.

This shift represents an important step forward in the relationship between planning programs and disenfranchised residents. A commitment to social justice-oriented rhetoric is more helpful than a recurring narrative of erasure and pathology. I

argue, however, that the RLA and other governmental planning organizations' rhetorical commitment to working class residents of color largely amounted to a form of public relations to salve public dissent rather than a substantive change in the planning process. Though this engagement with racism and classism and this newfound commitment to ground-up planning was more substantive than later neoliberal appropriation of difference, it still used social justice rhetoric in service of a planning establishment that largely failed to provide for its citizens.

One of the primary disconnects between the rhetorical moves of the RLA reports is that RLA used photos of residents of color to conflate their actions with the actions of the RLA. These images erased the distance of the middle and upper-middle class members of the RLA and working-class residents, not only showing that they were listening to resident, but implying that they *were* working-class residents of color themselves.

In this 1967 cover photo, children are again used to represent the goals and accomplishments of the RLA in addition to imbuing the RLA with child-like innocence, purity, and potential (Figure 30)⁴⁹. Because the RLA is constructed as an aid agency and because the photos show people aiding community members, these photos construct the RLA as the black community members themselves, despite the disproportionate amount of white members in leadership positions. A photo's caption from the same report reads, "RLA builds for the future" (Figure 31).⁵⁰ The caption describes the subjects (i.e. children are the future,) but it also describes an action. Here, the older black student is building the future by teaching another black neighbor, rhetorically bonding the RLA and the black student as one in the same.

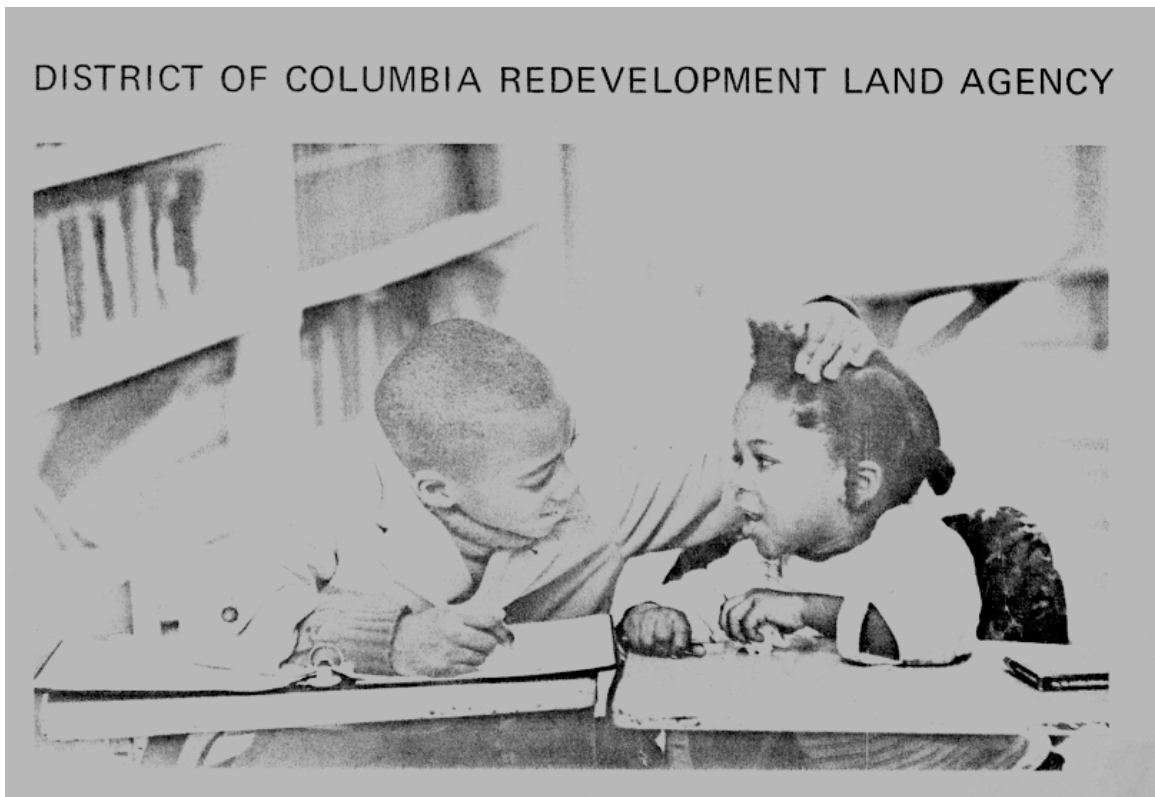


Figure 30. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967, Front Cover.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

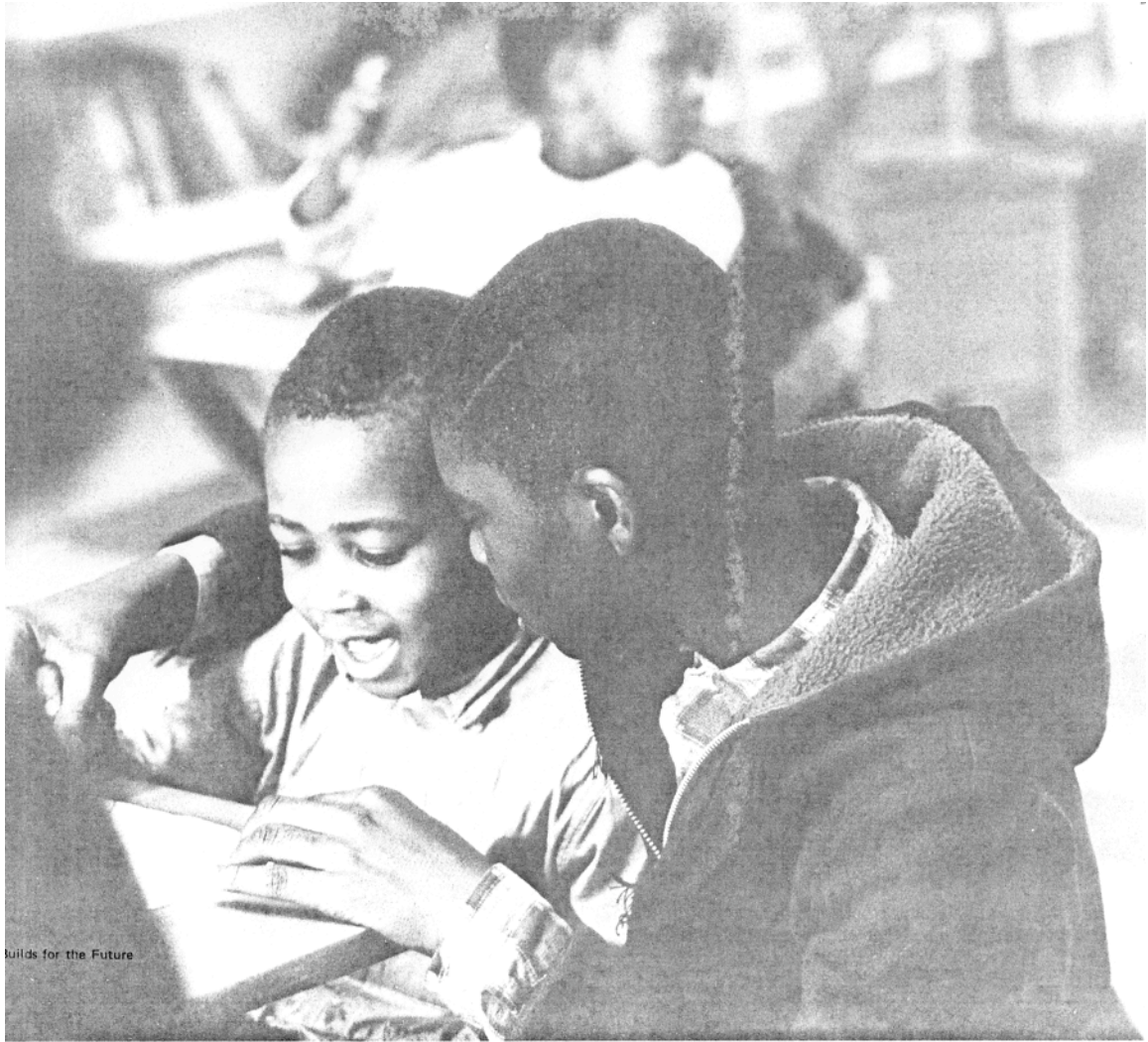


Figure 31. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

In RLA's 1970 annual report, a photo shows two RLA representatives talking with "community representatives" outside its field office in Columbia Heights (Figure 32.)⁵¹ The literal street-level interaction shows that the RLA is not just an organization working for the people. Instead the photo shows that the RLA *is* the community, designing its redevelopment plans one informal sidewalk conversation at a time. In the RLA's 1971 annual report, they note that an open-air market was held by the Columbia

Heights Street Academy, a local youth group.⁵² The RLA proudly reports that the market was held on agency-owned land. The blurb associates the RLA with organic community activism, but the story implies that the RLA facilitated the event. In fact, given Columbia Heights' history of impromptu gardens, parks, and markets springing up in empty RLA lots to partially to protest the agency's redevelopment lag, it is doubtful that the RLA sponsored the event so much as it agreed to allow the group to use the space.⁵³ No matter what the exact circumstances were, these examples show RLA's concerted effort to not only represent itself as an entity that was helping the community, but as an entity that *was* the community as well.

This move deflects critics' charges that the D.C. development establishment relied on top-down tactics that failed to incorporate the needs and desires of marginalized residents. If the RLA *was* the people it was serving than how could it be charged with not helping those people? In reality, the RLA did not have the grassroots trustworthiness of groups like MICCO. They manufactured this image through their promotional materials. Reading this visual culture shows how race and class were appropriated, articulating the disconnect between inclusive rhetoric and material reality.

Despite the rhetoric, the RLA did not reverse disinvestment in poor and working-class black neighborhoods. Following the uprisings, city officials promised but failed to deliver swift redevelopment- a battleground abandoned as the War on Poverty and other federal programs dried up under Nixon. Each stalled development initiative can be traced back to quotidian issues of zoning, political jockeying, and other realities of planning. Whatever the reason, the city continually failed to provide jobs, affordable housing, and basic amenities for many residents. Plans were made to re-route the emerging subway to



RLA Field Office at 2805 14th Street, N.W. Left to right—William L. Torrence, Deputy Area Director for 14th Street Urban Renewal Area and Cleophus Johns Area Supervisor for Family Relocation, with community representatives.

Figure 32. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1970.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

the areas hardest hit by the riots...but the subway didn't not fully open for thirty years. The RLA bought up several parcels of burned-out and abandoned buildings only to sit on the properties for decades.

Though the RLA used its reports as a way to narrate the planning process in a particular way, "controlling the story" to head off criticism, dissent among community groups and residents was registered throughout. As a final example of this continued resistance to suspect rhetoric of social justice, I turn to the *Final Environment Statement for the First, Second, and Third Action Years of the District of Columbia Neighborhood Development Program Fourteenth Street Urban Renewal Area*, an oversight of RLA's planning process published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1973. The report touted the continued redevelopment efforts of the RLA in Columbia Heights and the 14th Street corridor, setting forth a development agenda dedicated to providing "housing for low and moderate income families and individuals, with necessary related public and private facilities to provide a viable residential environment."⁵⁴

Like many major reports about urban renewal at this time, the *Final Environment Statement* also included appendices that reported particular organizations' responses to the report. In the back of the document itself, organizations were able to note any objections they had or discrepancies they found. One of the more prolific responses in the appendices was that of the Metropolitan Washington Planning and Housing Association (MWPHA), a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to the creation and maintenance of low-income housing.⁵⁵ The MWPHA took issue with several of the statements in the report. Far from the celebratory language of redevelopment

transforming the lives of low-income residents of color, the MWPHA's statements paint a very different reality.

"It is difficult to understand how the Department of Housing and Urban Development can justify suspending housing programs," they wrote, "and at the same time continue to dislocate low- and moderate-income families."⁵⁶ MWPHA destroys the cognitive dissonance of the report, questioning how effective a rhetoric of redevelopment can be if there is no money for redevelopment. Their response put the report into conversation with unprecedented federal funding cuts under Nixon, a fact that report suspiciously left out. Later in the response they take the RLA specifically to task, bluntly stating that the "RLA has never developed a program for developing skills or hiring area residents. Nor have they drawn up an economic plan." HUD's response is more of a non-response, skirting a direct denial of their claims with a canned message that the RLA will continue to studiously "work with the consultant team on a variety of matters."⁵⁷

Later on in their response, MWPHA takes HUD to task for painting a falsely cheery façade onto a serious crisis for urban residents. "Nowhere," they chide, "does there appear discussion of the terrifying decay and abandoning which has occurred since the urban renewal began in 14th street."⁵⁸ HUD's response is even more out of sync than previous responses. Instead of agreeing that renewal is not going fast enough, HUD reports back that, "through urban renewal there is an opportunity to replace substandard housing with new construction and provide relocation assistance to displaced occupants."⁵⁹ HUD does not offer a specific response out of defensiveness, primarily because the MWPHA's critique exposes the reports' distorted version of events. Rather

than agree to the MWPFA's claim, HUD offers a rote definition of urban renewal and promises to research the matter further.

The MWPFA's responses offer an archive of dissent that illustrate a) the specific realities these reports ignored and b) the organized resistance to federal and local planning initiatives that existed from the start. The RLA did not succeed by duping the population of Columbia Heights. As evidenced by this report, MICCO's literature, and by my conversations with residents, many people fought the inaction of the RLA. However, by saying all the right words, the RLA and other officials were able to convince *some* residents and influential organizations such as HUD. Like all dominant ideology, the optimistic and unrealistic narratives were contested, but I argue they did contribute to the decades-long negligence of the RLA in Columbia Heights. The language that promised swift change for all citizens served as a place holder, a statement that stood in for action rather than representing the actions taking place. That rhetoric, combined with the RLA's increasing investment in top-down approaches to development strengthened and concentrated their power to act (or not act) as they pleased.

Participation as Citizenship: The Limits of "Citizen Participation"

The concept of "citizen participation" was the central trope that forwarded a rhetorical commitment to planning by and for the people that ran through reports such as the aforementioned RLA and HUD reports. Analyzing ideas about citizen participation in the planning process highlights who was valued, who was silenced, and how the language of self-empowerment and grassroots action were used to cover up often ineffective, uneven development. Though there was a distinct shift from top-down planning models

that privileged experts to the “for us, by us” model of ground-up, resident focused planning, rhetorical commitment to “citizen participation” had been a part of D.C. planning rhetoric since the early 1950s. Because of its highlighted role in redevelopment after the civil uprisings, I will now unpack citizen participation rhetoric as it has influenced Washington, D.C. planning across the decades.

Rather than creating a dichotomy between modernist top-down planning and ground-up approaches of the late 1960s and 1970s, it is important to acknowledge the role “citizen participation” rhetoric played in earlier planning documents. Charles Connerly has traced the role federal urban policy has had in supporting citizen participation requirements in planning since the early 1950s. The passage of the “workable program” provision of the Housing Act of 1954 required all renewal plans to provide detailed relocation plans and proof of citizen participation.⁶⁰ Conceptualizing modernist planning as a unilaterally top-down model denies citizen participation provisions. This rhetoric was used in service of a planning ideology that did ultimately privilege top-down approaches, but only after examining how citizen participation was selectively constructed and appropriated can we understand how it worked to conceal development processes that went against what most residents wanted.

Though plan reports, touting the outcomes of limited community meetings, implied that residents were on board with particular plans, resistance to the plans was widespread. Charles Connerly’s study of planning initiatives in Birmingham shows that black residents in urban renewal areas have historically put up an organized fight against these supposedly universally accepted plans.⁶¹ He argues that this resistance eventually led to a larger focus on citizen participation seen in planning initiatives throughout the

1960s and 1970s.⁶² Concomitant with the rise of black power groups, resistance to anemic citizen participation efforts gave way to more direct representation.

In Washington, D.C., this manifested as groups such as MICCO and the 14th Street Political Action Committee. I argue that the move to increased citizen participation was short lived, as the MICCO heyday was eliminated by the early 1970s. I also argue that even when the RLA did incorporate more citizen participation, the meetings and the photo opportunities were largely rhetorical moves to stave off dissent. Even with increased visibility and an increased language of black resident empowerment, actual development remained a slow, top-down process removed from the direct desires of residents. Juxtaposing an analysis of citizen participation rhetoric with Columbia Heights residents' experiences illustrates how the RLA and other planning officials constructed a mirage of democracy and consent to hide residents' continued dissatisfaction.

Since 1950, RLA annual reports have listed the public meetings it conducted throughout the year, showing their commitment to residents' concerns. In the city's *Policies Plan for 2000*, published in 1961, the text acknowledges that "full participation" of residents is necessary for plans to be successful.⁶³ In 1966 the city commissioned a full report of citizen participation, concluding that participation is a key part of planning.⁶⁴ However, the participation of qualified citizens, i.e. middle-class, educated professionals was widely preferred to general citizen input, a problem in a majority working-class neighborhood. For instance, in *No Slums in Ten Years*, ideal citizen participants are expected to have "outstanding experience and reputation."⁶⁵

When citizen participation was included, often times the goal of planners was to build consensus on a previously generated idea rather than working with residents to

build a workable development plan. In *No Slums in Ten Years*, the authors note that, “while the initiative and most of the action will be taken by official agencies, acceptance by the community of the goal of urban renewal is essential.”⁶⁶ This was more about selling already-hatched ideas rather than building something with citizens.

Consent for development plans was often gleaned because of the appealing promises plans made. In the *Final Environment Statement for the First, Second, and Third Action Years of the District of Columbia Neighborhood Development Program, Fourteenth Street Urban Renewal Area* of 1973, the 14th Street Project Area Committee (PAC), a local group of citizens that provided citizen input to the RLA, overwhelmingly approved the RLA’s plans to rebuild 14th street after the uprisings. They approved because they “felt the Plan reflected the special character and needs of the community.”⁶⁷

Indeed the *Final Environment Statement*’s language did reflect the special character of the community. It contained “several socio-economic objectives: 1) Provide housing predominantly for families and individuals of low and moderate income. 2) Provide sites for housing, including Public Housing on a scattered site basis, to relieve overcrowding and to accommodate families and individuals displaced by redevelopment. 3) Create and expand centers of employment to provide new employment opportunities.”⁶⁸ The problem was that the PAC gave its support based on the RLA’s stated intent. If the PAC had known that the goals of sufficient public housing, employment training, and living wage jobs remain largely unfulfilled to this day, their consent would not have been so forthcoming.⁶⁹

Most adulation of citizen participation was tempered by rhetoric that privileged planners over residents as the parties best equipped to shape the built environment.

Howard Gillette notes that in 1972, Melvin Mister of the RLA released a report that argued the lag in development was primarily because of too much citizen participation.⁷⁰ Instead of viewing citizen participation as the bedrock of responsible development, Mister instead blamed residents as the cause for stalled development. Citizen participation will rarely lead to consensus among all residents, presenting a challenge even to those planners that are invested in following the desires of most residents. . It is not a reason to denigrate the process and imply that its eradication will lead to better development. Instead, this reality begs new solutions to provide swift and democratic planning processes.

The focus on citizen participation has prevailed throughout the years and remains a major part of planning ideology in the present day. To use the development of the parcels surrounding the Columbia Heights Metrorail station in the late 1990s as an example, residents were invited to community meetings and charrettes to discuss what plans to develop. In the citywide *Comprehensive Plan* of 2006, the text was interspersed with quote boxes revealing residents' desires for the city (Figure 33).⁷¹ Often times the quotes correspond to text that shows the city listened and respondent to that resident's concern. Just as the city's investment in citizen participation remains, so to does the selective engagement with that input. The quote boxes juxtaposed with the plan's text imply that the city has successfully put residents' wishes into action. The "action" however is itself more rhetoric. While including these concerns in official planning documents is a good step towards inclusive planning, the inclusions are still nonperformatives conflated with actually doing what the plan says it will.

Policy MC-1.2.4: New Parks

Explore the possibility for new neighborhood parks within the Mid-City area, particularly in the area around the proposed Howard Town Center, and on the McMillan Reservoir site. Additionally, pocket parks and plazas such as those planned for the Columbia Heights Metro station area should be encouraged elsewhere in the Planning Area, particularly near higher density development. The dearth of parks in the Mid-City area is a serious problem that must be addressed as its population grows—all recreation areas must be retained and new recreation areas must be provided wherever possible. 2009.4

Policy MC-1.2.5: Neighborhood Greening

Undertake neighborhood greening and planting projects throughout the Mid-City Area, particularly on median strips, public triangles, and along sidewalk planting strips. 2009.5

Policy MC-1.2.6: Mid-City Historic Resources

Protect the historic resources of the Mid-City area, with particular attention to neighborhoods that are currently not protected by historic district designation. Historic resources to be protected also include the Taft and Ellington Bridges, Meridian Hill Park, the First Church Christ Scientist, and the historic Holt House. The design integrity of the bridges shall be preserved, and Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park and the area around it shall be managed to preserve historic vistas and view corridors, as well as historic park features. 2009.6

"The Comprehensive Plan cannot begin to express the pride the community feels in its diversity and how important it is to the fabric of many Mid-City neighborhoods. Any future action and programs must honor and respect this diversity of culture, economics, race, and ethnicity."

— ANCI1A, OCTOBER 2006
HEARING TESTIMONY.

**Figure 33. Washington, D.C. Office of Planning, *Comprehensive Plan for the Nation's Capital*, 2007, p20-15.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

In the D.C. Office of Planning's *Columbia Heights Target Investment Plan* report, a list of residents' development priorities are listed in descending order: preservation and creation of affordable housing, social services such as job training, and neighborhood-oriented business.⁷² After logging what citizen participation has yielded, the report goes on to list the Office of Planning's main goals. Though school improvement and increased employment opportunities are number one, affordable housing is priority number five in a list of eight.⁷³ Within a matter of pages, planners have diverged from residents' main concerns.

Even if the official list kept the exact order of residents' priorities intact, it does not change the fact that none of these desires were the top priority of recent development strategies. The desire for affordable housing and social services were not the driving forces of recent development, nor was neighborhood-oriented business. Business was drawn to the area, but Target, Best Buy, and other large chains with low-paying service job opportunities do not necessarily encapsulate "neighborhood-oriented business." Similarly, independent businesses such as cocktail bars charging \$15 for a cocktail and a spa offering expensive Botox treatments are not necessarily "oriented" to Columbia Heights's longtime residents.

In the D.C. Office of Planning's *Implementing Transit Oriented Development in D.C.* report, the authors offer a backhanded validation of citizen participation. "Often, neighborhood residents fight development proposals," the report states. "Too often this is simply because not enough information was shared with residents early on in the process."⁷⁴ Though the statement encourages developers to include residents more comprehensively, it also implies that residents' resistance to development proposals are misguided. Furthermore, the report concludes that, "ultimately, 'implementation' of community involvement lies with community members themselves to participate in developments in their communities and encourage others to join as well."⁷⁵ In other words, it is citizens' responsibility to attend these meetings. The new qualified citizen can be low-income and can be people of color, as evidenced by the accompanying photo proving the diversity of present-day community meetings (Figure 34).⁷⁶ These citizens, however, must earn their citizenship through the attendance of these meetings. This sets up a dangerous prerequisite that excludes those who do not attend as non-citizens.



Public involvement early on in the planning and development process is critical to project success.

Figure 34. Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *Implementing Transit Oriented Development*, p46.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

As evidenced by the conversation surrounding the Columbia Heights charrette analyzed in chapter five, many residents were not aware of community meetings or could not attend. The responsibility was disproportionately shunted onto individual citizens, partially absolving the responsibility of powerful governmental and commercial actors that lead development. Secondly, using citizen participation as the primary component of planning is admirable, but the over-privileging of participation stigmatizes residents who do not attend community meetings. While encouraging residents to attend meetings fosters more representative input, residents' failure to attend does not forfeit their right to resources and liveable communities.

Visual and textual citizen participation rhetoric is a vital component in manufacturing consent for development plans that have, especially in the last two decades, primarily served incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents of Columbia Heights. I argue that citizen participation rhetoric within neoliberal development purposefully denies citizenship to low-income residents of color. As long as enough of these residents show up for a multicultural photo opportunity, plans can go forth with the implied endorsement of all residents. As was the case with the parcels surrounding the Columbia Heights Metro station, having some racial and class diversity at community meetings was used to justify the development plans as universally beneficial to all of Columbia Heights. Those who did not participate in these meetings, often the same residents who felt disenfranchised and victimized by impending upscale development, were silenced as residents who willingly forfeited their rights.

The prevalence of citizen participation rhetoric complicates a conceptualization of planning as wholly top-down and oblivious to residents' concerns. Though this rhetorical commitment has the potential to include more everyday voices into the process, it was also appropriated to justify inequitable development. It reflects that planners and developers were forced to address issues of inclusion to appease residents' demands, but it was often used as a largely rhetorical device to appease residents in service of development that went against marginalized residents' best interest.

In general, the longtime Columbia Heights residents I spoke with felt that they were not included despite the city's decades-long rhetorical commitment to citizen participation. This is not proof that citizen participation efforts were a failure, but residents' dismay illustrates that citizen participation rhetoric often covered over

residents' continued resistance and demands for better, more equitable development. Though many of my respondents spoke more generally about the city and development and not specifically about the (lack of) development in the immediate aftermath of the civil uprisings, this general dissatisfaction reveals a culture of distrust among residents of color.

Referencing the hard fought battle over the development of the parcels surrounding the Columbia Heights Metro station, Rachel laments,

It's the money that basically has been stolen from us that really bothers me. I mean we paid these merchants to come here and I just think that in 10 or 15 years we got to knock it down and do it all over again. And they'll be gone with the loot. And if we don't explore exactly what went wrong this time we'll end up with the same thing again because the other thing that people tend to over look is that even after the riots 14th Street remained a commercial corridor.... If they were going to recreate it, like I said, it just should have had a bigger. It really, really should have been much more unique than that.

Remembering the vitality of the black shopping district in the “city within a city” of Columbia Heights, Rachel sees the long-awaited rebuilding of the commercial corridor as an insult to the residents who waited for so long to see the revitalization of the neighborhood they fondly remembered.

When I asked Valerie how the city has handled redevelopment in the area she said, “oh my goodness, it sucks! It’s so much bureaucracy, rhetoric, nonsense; all the negative things I want to say without using profanity.” The example of government failure that Valerie continually brings up throughout our interview is the recent firing of 241 mostly black, native Washingtonian public school teachers. It is not directly related to development, but is related to her conceptualization of the government’s relationship to black residents. Fired by controversial school chancellor Michelle Rhee with the

support of mayor Adrian Fenty, the teachers were laid off in an effort to improve the school system. Fenty and Rhee argued that they were getting rid of ineffective teachers that were not producing satisfactory student test score results.⁷⁷ For many black residents, the massive firing was representative of the Fenty administration's lack of commitment to working class residents of color. Most analysts agree that these concerns led to Fenty's defeat to Vincent Gray in the mayoral primary of 2010. Gray, a long time city official, spoke out against Fenty and Rhee and based his campaign primarily around critiquing Fenty's neglect of longtime residents, unions, and civil rights activists.⁷⁸

Valerie explains,

Then he ousts all of these teachers which, actually I again witnessed a hearing on television. These old school teachers it didn't matter if they were in their late 60s. It's not the point. You don't give a person a pink slip and all of a sudden they don't have a job.... It was so sad because these people have to pay their mortgages. They have a livelihood that was taken away from them because guess what, you have this 21st century mayor who has that much power to oust you. That's not fair!

Given that Valerie herself has been out of work, she was emotionally affected by these transactions. Her alienation was similar to those longtime professionals in D.C.

For Valerie, outrage over the direction of D.C. public schools is tied to a larger disappointment with governments' prioritization of incoming residents. Her comments potentially associate incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents with the financial and emotional disinvestment in D.C. public schools.⁷⁹ They can afford to send their children to private school or they can afford to move out of Washington, D.C. before their children (if they have them) get to be school-aged. They can also afford to advocate ways to improve D.C. public schools that do not directly affect them, i.e. firing longtime

teachers and siphoning resources away from traditional public schools into limited-enrollment charter schools.

Later in this chapter I will discuss the debate over schools in more depth, but I include Valerie's sentiments here because, even though she does not have children and is not a teacher, Valerie sees the battle over D.C. public schools as part of a battle over who deserves what resources in the city. The teachers' firing represents another example of city officials choosing incoming white people (i.e. new, young teachers and incoming residents who are not invested in D.C. public schools) over longtime black residents (i.e. longtime black city teachers and those residents with students in D.C. public schools that want good education without mass firings.)

James frames his comments about development in terms of who said development is targeting. "They got a lot of condos up there," he says referring to the Columbia Heights Metro station area. "They build these condos and I think some percentage is for the senior citizens too, but the rest of 'em are like that.... But they're empty, nobody can afford them. Empty space. Like I said, after the '68 riots, they built three places. They built Upper Cardozo Clinic and a couple low-income apartments. That's all they had up there. Since then!" James outrage is two-fold: he resents that it took so long for development to come to Columbia Heights and he resents that the long-awaited development has overwhelmingly been allocated for newcomers. To add insult to injury, these upscale developments haven't attracted enough incoming residents leaving them as empty, wasted space that could be helping longtime Columbia Heights residents.

In addition to feeling as though the city has stalled in developing Columbia Heights, some respondents felt as though they have not been included in the process.

Loretta, a fifty-something black resident of Columbia Heights tells me that the city, “ain’t did nothing”:

They did nothing but got paid and got the people they wanted in the office with them. I don't think I've been included. They have little things around about having a meeting somewhere. But that's every now and then. I don't think so much about Columbia Heights. I don't feel like we've been included in anything. We just here. Here existing. And they're just - this is just something for them to say out their mouth. Talking loud and saying nothing. They're not doing anything about it. They're having meeting. How many people can you count on your hands even go?

Loretta not only expresses outrage that her needs and desires have been sublimated by the top-down planning process, she also acknowledges that she has been marginalized within a process that has the audacity to feed citizens disingenuous rhetoric that their best interests are being represented. She doesn’t explain if there was a particular reason she did not attend the meetings leading up to the redevelopment of Columbia Heights, but asserts that enough people were absent to invalidate them as the representing the universal (or even majority) will of the neighborhood.

Rachel, on the other hand, did attend the development meetings. She, however, came to a similar conclusion. “I don’t want to come off as entirely negative,” she told me, “but I feel like... I think that we've been duped. When we were talking about the development scheme I had only been here two or three years. But because my mother was an elected official, I had a recognizable name, so people would listen and they would invite me to... as soon as they found out I was against the project...” Rachel’s unique position and subsequent treatment illustrate the restrictions built into models of citizen participation.

As a black woman with historic ties to the neighborhood, her potential approval in some ways helped developers and planners prove the universal appeal of developers’

plans for the area. Because she was also a recent homeowner and real estate lawyer with close ties to then-incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents, Rachel was invited with open arms representing newcomers' interest with the authenticity of a longtime resident of color. When her opinions did not match up with the plans that developers and disproportionately represented newcomers wanted, she felt she was frozen out of the process. She went from a participant that would justify developers' decisions to another contrary voice to be ignored. Her experience not only reflects the lack of agency some residents felt in the supposedly "citizen participation"-rich planning process, it reinforces my argument that token inclusion of residents of color was integral in developers' push for plans that often favored incoming white middle-class residents.

'Mayor for Life': Race, Trust, and the Infamy of Marion Barry

When asked about their opinions about development and city politics, most of my respondents brought up Marion Barry. Washington D.C.'s "Mayor for life" was seen as the first official who represented the ideals embedded in the hard-won fight for Home Rule in 1973. When Marion Barry was elected mayor in 1979, he was seen by many as a leader who embodied the needs of working class residents of color. It also echoed a nationwide increase in black politicians being elected in urban areas.⁸⁰ With an impressive resume of work within organizations like the Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Barry's campaign successfully channeled residents' frustration with leadership that- even under home rule- was still closely tied to classed, establishment politics. Furthermore, Barry's campaign appealed to white Liberals looking for an authentic mayor to represent D.C.'s black population without directly alienating

white constituents. In the primary debates against then incumbent mayor Walter E. Washington, Barry spoke of bringing the city much needed social services and more black political power.⁸¹ This explicit appeal to low-income residents of color resonated with a city fed up with black officials such as Washington that were accused of being tied too closely with the white establishment.

He vouched that his administration was “stimulating development in a long-forgotten portion of the city.” He argued that his primary vehicle of change- minority participation- “has enabled many minority firms to expand their operations in the extraordinary redevelopment occurring in the city.”⁸² He set a goal to increase minority contractors from 10% to 35%.⁸³ His commitment to minority participation reflects national trends Julius Wilson describes in *The Truly Disadvantaged*, writing, “after 1970 there was a move away from addressing the needs of the ‘underclass’ among civil rights leaders who were preoccupied with the affirmative action agenda of the black middle-class.”⁸⁴ Affirmative action is a social justice-oriented response to redress systemic marginalization of workers of color. It is not my intention to malign the ideological worth or effectiveness of affirmative action as a whole. In the context of the redevelopment of Washington D.C. under Barry’s tenure, however, it is important to examine the kind of development into which newly included minority firms and workers bought.

Barry’s primary focus was on the repopulation of Washington D.C. and the subsequent return of much needed tax revenue. To the Barry administration’s credit, they did complete a handful of important low-income housing projects, senior apartment complexes, and office buildings in disinvested areas. Many projects, however, were more removed from the constituents for whom he vowed to fight. Barry’s rhetoric of racial and

class justice was often deployed in service of a development strategy aimed at upward redistribution. Two of his major touted achievements, for instance, were the revitalization of the relatively upscale downtown shopping district and ushering Washington D.C. to have the third largest amount of office space in the nation.⁸⁵

Barry and the RLA in this period of time did facilitate some projects designed to aid low-income residents in Columbia Heights. Barry oversaw the construction of a Boys and Girls Club on 14th street, an apartment building partially sponsored by the National Council for Black Aging (NCBA) that catered to black, elderly residents, and a low-rise apartment building for persons with disabilities.⁸⁶ In the RLA's 1982 annual report, new residents of the NCBA apartment building are shown smiling and laughing (Figure 35).⁸⁷ In the RLA's 1983 report, residents of the newly opened Claypoole Court public housing complex are shown walking down the street in their neighborhood (Figure 36).⁸⁸

In both photos, Columbia Heights is shown as a success story. The images say that, finally, after decades of inaction, Columbia Heights has been given some of the resources its residents need. This shift is important. These projects illustrate the role the Barry administration had in serving under-represented wards, a fulfilled campaign promise. The spatial concentration of these projects, however, coupled with the upscale revitalization of commercial downtown illustrate the uneven development of Columbia Heights.

Though the apartment buildings served the low-income population that made up the majority of Columbia Heights, the increased social service development partially reflects the dominant assumption that Columbia Heights was not fit for the kind of redevelopment the downtown core received. Columbia Heights became an isolated

community receiving some aid, but was also kept far away from a development campaign that reaped large profits for the city and developers, not to mention the middle-class professionals who could now enjoy better residential and commercial destinations.⁸⁹ The primacy given to more upscale development is evidenced in the sheer number of projects in the downtown core rather than Columbia Heights. As soon as Columbia Heights was seen as a viable site for more upscale investment, public housing and other resources for low-income people in the neighborhood were given much less focus. Columbia Heights was a haven of social justice when no one was willing to build department stores there. When things started looking up, Columbia Heights became an area flush with what the Washington DC Economic Partnership billed as a “new crowd of residents, employers, retailers and tourists,” with “new energy and excitement” and the ever-enticing new 25-44 year old demographic.⁹⁰

In the RLA retrospective report charting the years 1979 through 1985, photos of Barry’s development successes in the downtown core are given the most attention. Black city officials and developers are seen donning hard hats to complement their business attire, digging in for a groundbreaking ceremony. Barry is shown standing outside the newly opened Hecht’s department store, the crown jewel in the downtown redevelopment project of the 1980s (Figure 37).⁹¹



NCRA Photos

Figure 35. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1982, p30.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)



**Figure 36. RLA, *Annual Report*, 1983, p27.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)**

In these celebratory photos, people of color are in charge of development not just the neglected or patronized, faceless poor. Yet this is a distinctly neoliberal moment in which racial justice is figured as a limited buy-in to a boom of upwardly distributive development. Like photos of the token few who received relocation services in the 1950s,

the select people and firms included in these empowering images stand in for more widespread equitable development.

Showing black residents as the people in charge has its roots in visual representations of black residents helping black residents. Instead of showing PAC meetings about the development of community centers, however, they show a handful of people of color at the top of business and retail development. In some ways these photos resist the silencing stereotype that all black residents rely on the charity of the government. Here, black people *are* the government. While these images may counteract racist assumptions, they do so by distancing middle-class people of color from low-income people of color.

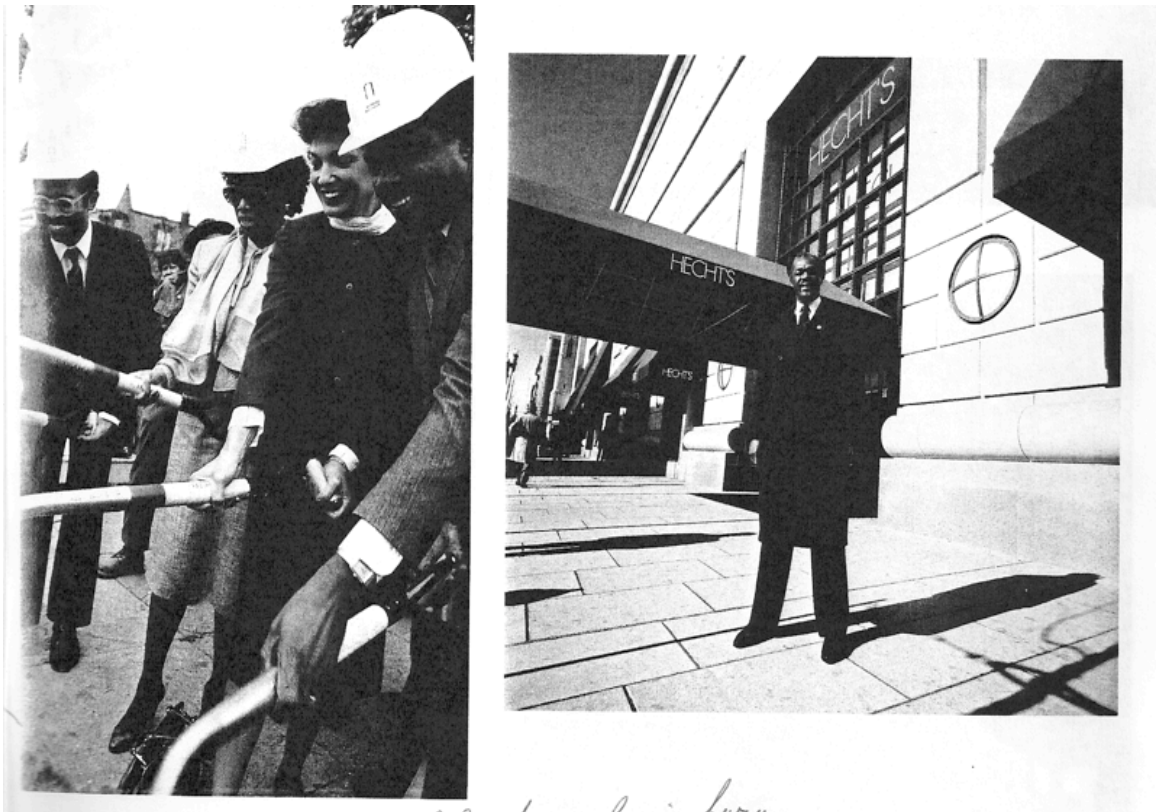


Figure 37. RLA, 1979-1985 Report, 1986, p5.
(Courtesy of Washingtoniana Division, DC Public Library)

Ultimately, the main weakness of this strategy is that this development did not trickle down to benefit low-income people and instead siphoned much needed resources into upward development that harmed more residents of color than it aided. In his comprehensive history of D.C. planning, Howard Gillette argues, “by appealing both to local antagonism against the government and to racial solidarity, [Barry] continued to dominate Washington politics, even when he strayed far from his socially progressive agenda. Rather than effecting social change or building local consensus, however, he left Washington even more bitterly divided by race and class than he found it.”⁹² In addition to his appropriation of social justice language, Barry was also plagued by charges of corruption and illegal activity. His arrest for crack cocaine in 1990 became a national punch line, especially when he was re-elected after serving his sentence. In recent years he has been a further cause of embarrassment among some D.C. residents after being censured by the D.C. Council for his role in awarding a city contract to a woman he was romantically involved with at the time.⁹³

Though Gillette’s point is well taken, dismissing Barry as a failure denies the important symbolic role he played in black D.C. residents’ lives. Though many black residents critique Barry’s past and present behavior, opinions of Barry tend to split along racial and class lines. That Barry was arrested for doing a drug tied to a canon of racist and classist “crackhead” jokes did little to dissuade this split. The alternative *Washington City Paper*, which appeals to a young professional readership, regularly makes tongue-in-cheek remarks about Barry’s absurd persona and antics.

In July of 2009 the *City Paper* ran a cover story about accusations that an ex-aide had been punished for not engaging in sexual acts with Barry. The cover page showed

Barry with the aide and this quote from a voicemail she left him was emblazoned over the photo: “you put me out in Denver because I wouldn’t suck your dick.”⁹⁴ The cover image is meant to be humorous and provocative. It may be intended to ridicule his lack of professional acumen, but the joke hinges on finding humor in the seemingly unprofessional nature of black vernacular.⁹⁵ Barry has continually been criticized for unprofessionalism, but that critique has often been tinged with racism. Beyond judging the ethics of Marion Barry, I am primarily interested in exploring my respondents’ opinions about Barry.

I found that some of my respondents still trusted and respected Barry. Gail, a black native Washingtonian in her 70s, remembers him fondly. “He was a good man, Marion Barry,” she says. “He would walk with these teenagers. Now they ain’t got nobody here to walk with them. To talk to them. Marion Barry used to walk with them and talk to them, so they won’t get in trouble. Now they don’t have anybody to talk to. Their summer jobs and everything. Now nobody talk to them.” For Gail, Barry did do a lot to help youths in a way that mayors since have not. Though this nostalgic visual goes along with the cult of personality that Gillette criticizes, Gail’s investment in the idea of a leader involved with an at-risk population meaningfully critiques subsequent mayors’ perceived disinterest in vulnerable citizens.

Eric agreed that, “Barry took care of all the poor people, the older people and kids.” When Hector interrupted Eric, jokingly adding, “he took care of his drug habits,” Martin chimed in and reiterated Eric’s sentiments: “Yeah, well that too. He did a lot for the city, too... Barry was looking out for the youth.” Martin allows Barry to be complex, revealing the way in which simplifying Barry into a punch line denies his work with

youth of color. Martin is aware of Barry's faults, but is also aware that a critique of Barry can also be an implicit slight to the constituents to which he pledged his support. Even if Barry failed to deliver some of these promises, a defense of Barry was often a way to defend the very idea that local officials should explicitly tackle racial and economic marginalization.

The adulation of Marion Barry could be viewed as proof that his rhetorical bait and switch was successful among certain constituents. More importantly, though, I argue that the nostalgia of Marion Barry in the age of feared gentrification and displacement says a lot about how and why residents feel marginalized. For instance, Valerie compares Barry to recent controversy surrounding Adrian Fenty, a mayor increasingly associated with incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents:

They tried to get Marion for giving his girlfriend a contract. OK, how about you Fenty? You gave your... I mean, it's like a constant... and I think they should oust, you know? Get them out of there. He had this lady- I can't think of her name- she was the acting director of Parks and Recreation. They interviewed her and she didn't have a clue about anything. And again, this was one of mayor Fenty's protégés. You know, these hand-picked people.

Valerie sees the hypocrisy of how people have villainized Marion Barry, but have failed to put the same pressure on officials like Fenty. Her outrage potentially circles back to the racial and class components in critiques of Barry. If Barry is symbolic of disenfranchised residents of color then the disproportionate persecution of Barry represents an ideological war against residents of color, often led by incoming residents unwilling to hold their lauded leaders like Fenty to the same standards.

Rachel eloquently articulates this continued defense of Barry in the face of controversy: "whatever you say about him, he never stole our money. And people still

don't understand why black people don't care that he snorted coke. He never stole our money! He liked women and coke, but he showed up at work everyday. And accessibility. Anybody could get to him: 'I need this. I need that.'” Marion Barry’s legacy, then, goes beyond his focus on minority participation in uneven development. For many residents, his legacy stands in sharp contrast to officials who have continually alienated longtime residents in favor of satiating the desires of D.C.’s incoming professional class.

Section Three: 1990-2010

From Black Utopia to White Inclusion: Changes in Planning Documents

With the opening of the Columbia Heights Metro stop closer to reality than ever before, the early 1990s onward saw remarkable demographic shifts in Columbia Heights. Long a majority-black neighborhood, there was an increasing amount of white middle and upper-middle-class residents buying and renting property. Additionally, after an influx of Central American and Mexican immigrants in the adjacent Mt. Pleasant neighborhood, Columbia Heights became home to an increasing number of Latino/a residents. Planning approaches and rhetoric began to reflect this changing demographic reality. This section focuses on how difference was represented in planning literature beginning in the early 1990s: a period when demographics began changing, future development like the Metro station was becoming inevitable, and when the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism became further entrenched in U.S. cultural consciousness.

This period is shaped by the convergence of three ideologies gaining momentum within planning circles and mainstream urban consciousness. The first is the rise of

“multiculturalism” as a neoliberal approach to incorporating difference in American life. The 1990s ushered in a mainstream discussion of “diversity,” as nonprofits, corporate entities, universities, and government organizations began to officially espouse the importance of multicultural tolerance and- for lack of a better word- celebration. Despite some conservative backlash arguing against what Arthur Schlesinger called “the disuniting of America,” this rhetoric has become standard.⁹⁶ As noted earlier, however, the rhetoric of diversity is often used to relegate racial and ethnic difference to the realm of the cultural, denying systemic racism’s integral role in supporting the movement towards upward redistribution at the core of neoliberal policy.

The second school of thought influencing contemporary planning rhetoric is the mainstreaming of New Urbanism. Largely influenced by the work of Jane Jacobs, New Urbanism espoused mixed use development that merged residential, commercial, and public space to create small-scale, pedestrian friendly communities. This model was in direct contrast to suburbanization, but it also had implications for the concentration of certain kinds of businesses and residents.⁹⁷ Along with the shift to mixed use, planners began espousing the value of mixed income communities. Proponents of mixed-income housing have argued that it supplies low-income residents with amenities absent in areas with high concentrations of low-income housing.⁹⁸ An alternative that would not disrupt strong social networks formed in low-income communities would be to ensure low-income communities have access to resources regardless of what other classes of people move to the area. Instead the mixed-income proponents justify the idea that the infusion of middle and upper-middle-class residents and their tax revenue provide proper socialization for low-income people and create more sustainable communities.⁹⁹

Washington D.C.'s continued commitment to private-public partnerships to redevelop disinvested areas such as Columbia Heights is related to these planning theories. In addition to providing massive tax breaks for the private rehabilitation and/or construction of often upscale residential and commercial space, the city encouraged block by block gentrification via house lotteries and tax breaks with relatively high income ceilings. The reasoning behind these trends in development was primarily to attract much-needed tax revenue back into the city. Wooing middle and upper-middle-class residents who increasingly desired to be "back to the city" was justified as a way to rebuild disinvested communities and fight the concentration of poverty in areas such as Columbia Heights. This strategy has two inherent problems. Firstly, this ethos funnels city resources that could be used to help low-income residents to private corporations. Secondly, the mixed income philosophy that largely replaced public housing dramatically lowers the number of affordable units available to low-income residents.

The move towards embracing spatial and demographic "diversity" in a previously majority-working-class neighborhood is not like traditional rubrics of multiculturalism in which diversity is achieved by including people of color. In Columbia Heights, embracing "diversity" often meant embracing white and upper-class incoming residents. Local planning historian Dennis Gale argues in his landmark study of D.C. middle-class outmigration that,

the gentrification phenomenon represents an opportunity for the District government and the school board to reduce, or at least stabilize, middle-class out-migration to the suburbs. But it also suggests that it may be possible to stabilize the racial composition of the city's population and perhaps even raise the white population base to achieve a more balanced ratio of whites to minorities.¹⁰⁰

The question is why is it so important to achieve a balance of whites and blacks? Pragmatically, whites in D.C. are disproportionately middle and upper-middle-class, therefore representing a chance for increased tax revenue. Yet the arrival of whites has become naturalized in a racist logic that equates whiteness with community revitalization. In the last two decades the preoccupation with diversifying communities with middle and upper-middle-class residents has shifted from a means to an end to the attraction of middle and upper-middle-class residents as a goal in and of itself. Furthermore, increased tax revenue has not translated to an increase in affordable housing or commercial establishments; it has just spurred city funds to help finance new residences and businesses that cater to the newly arrived “creative class.”

This shift, as I reiterate throughout this dissertation, is influenced by the work of Richard Florida. His book *The Rise of the Creative Class* was not only a mainstream bestseller, Florida has been employed by several cities as a consultant involved in drafting development strategy. Florida’s strategy hinges on cities fostering selective “diversity” to attract upper middle-class “creative class” types to their cities. The creative class ethos is reflected in the 2008 Columbia Heights profile produced by the Washington D.C. Economic Partnership, a private/public economic development organization. It explains that “Columbia Heights is one of D.C.’s most diverse and urban neighborhoods.” The use of “diverse” and “urban” conjures up visions of authentically urban residents of color, while the focus on Columbia Heights’s “new crowd of residents, employers, retailers, and tourists,” assures potential investors that that diversity is attracting rather than repelling upscale clientele. The profile concludes that recently opened luxury apartment complexes such as Kenyon Square and Highland Park “have all

sparked new energy and excitement that Columbia Heights is ready to share.”¹⁰¹ This energy and excitement is tied to the recent influx of middle and upper-middle-class residents and visitors. In other words, Columbia Heights has become a hub of the creative class and is ready to have these residents targeted by more upscale development.

Florida offers a somewhat contradictory caveat to his creative class development strategy:

Affluent Creative class people who move into racially, ethnically or economically diverse neighborhoods cannot simply assume that their presence automatically ‘revitalizes’ these places. For many working class and service class residents, it doesn’t. Instead, all it usually does is raise their rents and perhaps create more low-end service jobs for waiters, housecleaners and the like.¹⁰²

He thus recognizes that the gentrification that reinforces the urban creative class can also lead to displacement. Florida, however, does not spend much time discussing possible solutions to this quandary. He advocates raising the salary of service workers so that they too can live off of creative industries like hairdressing. This, however, denies the fact that the prosperity of a creative class economy is built on the back of low-wage service labor. Cleaning up after the creative class and serving them food become the primary role of those not lucky enough to enter the creative class. Florida’s incongruous arguments represent a recurring theme in planning literature from the 1990s onward. Despite orchestrating neoliberal development projects that fuel gentrification and displacement, planning rhetoric continually expresses concerns for loss of affordable housing, displacement, and commercial gentrification.

Planning literature celebrates the successful redevelopment of areas such as Columbia Heights, but also acknowledges that problems continue in those areas. The *Comprehensive Plan* of 2006 starts with an introduction titled “Planning an Inclusive

City,” arguing the city strives “to be a more ‘inclusive’ city- to ensure that economic opportunities reach all of our residents, and to protect and conserve the things we value most about our communities.”¹⁰³ The use of “inclusion” uses the rhetoric of multiculturalism to simultaneously reinforce a commitment to marginalized residents of color while also referring to and justifying the inclusion of incoming middle and upper-middle-class white residents.

The *Comprehensive Plan* does not erase inequality. It provides a thorough description of the housing crisis among low-income residents of Washington, D.C. It addresses the hemorrhaging of affordable units, continued racial discrimination in the housing market, threat of displacement, and the increased rates of homelessness. The plan also notes that, “market pressures may result in displacement as affordable large rental units are converted to ‘luxury’ condos or upscale apartments.”¹⁰⁴

These concerns are also voiced in the “Mid-City Area Element” of the plan which deals with a section of Washington D.C. that contains Columbia Heights. Noting the sharp increase in housing units in recent years, the plan reads, “while this change has been welcomed by some, it has also created concerns about a loss of community identity and the displacement of residents. Homeowners have faced sharp increases in property taxes, and many renters have faced soaring rents and low vacancies.”¹⁰⁵ Three pages later, however, the report refers to the increase of upscale apartments as a “renaissance” in which neighborhoods were “restored and upgraded.” Furthermore, some of the very same “‘luxury’ condos and upscale apartments” that the plan laments are here lauded as a triumphant transformation that “have brought hundreds of new residents to U Street.”¹⁰⁶

Planners’ stated commitment to fight for affordable housing and against

displacement is an important step in growing an equitable development strategy. There is, however, cognitive dissonance between statements that express concern for the results of upscale development and those that celebrate them with the language of revitalization. Much like the lack of correlational thinking in Florida's arguments, these juxtaposed statements represent a rhetorical move in which the causal link between upscale development and affordability is obscured. The implied strategy to grow an "inclusive city" is to continue upscale development while also providing for low-income residents.

What this strategy fails to reconcile is that upscale development is directly responsible for the crisis of affordability. Instead of exploring solutions that would recalibrate investment strategies, it praises gentrification as if it can be sustained alongside some new, unnamed solution to stop displacement and the crisis of affordability. The inclusive city is dependent on scaling back upscale development. By incongruently admonishing the results of gentrification alongside the praise of the very same process, this language is yet another example of the longstanding use of social justice-oriented rhetoric in service of inequitable development processes.

Knowing the Score: Residents' Engagement with Planning Rhetoric

The longtime residents I spoke with had a far more nuanced grasp on what recent development in Columbia Heights means and whom it has served. Perhaps because they are directly affected by the process, respondents told me that the kind of development taking place in Columbia Heights brings up serious concerns. Rachel tells me she's trying to be optimistic, but she does not "think people understand that there really can be no sustainable progress in the community unless it's built on a proper foundation. It's very

disturbing to me that people think that gentrification is an answer and that it can actually sustain itself.” As a lawyer who owns her home, Rachel is not in the direct path of displacement, but she reveals that even professionals in the neighborhood are in danger:

I think that people again don't understand just how fragile Columbia Heights is. Most of the attorneys on this block- there's three of us- all three of us are self-employed. So it's very shaky. It's not the progress that the community has made in terms of even the types of professionals that come here. It's very shaky.

Through voicing the concerns of low-income residents and middle-class professionals like herself, Rachel illustrates the widespread dangers in a process of increased upscaling.

One of the main things respondents readily acknowledged was the racial dimension of redevelopment in recent years. Namely, that the influx of white people (their class status inextricably linked) put a spotlight on the neighborhood and catalyzed the distribution of resources.¹⁰⁷ Phillip, a black fifty-something lawyer, tells me an anecdote of his first years in Columbia Heights over a decade ago. He remembers his son, who was 12 at the time, telling him, ““you know dad, it used to be if I saw a white person on the street, I knew exactly who it was. It was either an intern or someone in a co-op. But I don't know who all these people are!”” Phillip laughs and says that that was “the tipping point.” Though it seems like a simple observation, Phillip's whimsical story counteracts the silences built into official planning rhetoric. Not so much a commitment to developing a long-disinvested neighborhood, the “tipping point” came after three long decades and only when white professionals began moving into Columbia Heights.

Hector, a forty-something Hispanic-identified man who has lived in Columbia Heights for 15 years, not only saw a rise in property values concurrent with a rise in white residents, he also saw this influx directly affect the quality of city service such as

trash collection.¹⁰⁸ “When white people moved in,” he told me, “the trash pickup got better.” At that point, his white neighbor Chelsea disagrees. “No,” the forty-something who has lived in Columbia Heights resident for over ten years says. “I don’t think it’s white people. I think it was the mayor.” Hector does not agree, responding emphatically that it was in fact the arrival of white people: “I don’t care what anybody is saying. I say that it was the white people. If there was still black people or Hispanic people living here, the trash would still be on the street.” He believes that, though residents of color were getting increased services, those residents were not seen as deserving unless they were bundled with middle-class white residents. The rhetoric of the “inclusive” city did not mention that inclusion was a collateral effect of classist and racist resource allocation.

Backed by the public-private push for investment, Columbia Heights has attracted new residents. Along with the influx of newcomers, the neighborhood has seen an improvement of city services. Hector and other residents have noted the improvement in trash collection, police responsiveness and other municipal services. Some improvement, like trash collection, has benefitted all residents. Other services, like increased policing, have helped many residents feel safe while other residents worry that low-income residents of color were the unfair targets of policing. In both examples, though, Hector is angry that he receives those benefits because more valued residents have arrived.

Hector’s anecdotal evidence is strongly felt, but his experience is not uncontested. Chelsea disagrees, which potentially reflects her social location. As a white person, she may not want to be implicated in the racism that affects the flow of resources. Because she was a white person that moved to the neighborhood shortly after Hector and suffered with poor city services as well, her experience may make her disagree with his claims. If

white people meant better services, where were they when she arrived? Chelsea and Hector's varying hypotheses illustrate how social location affects how residents conceptualize development and justice.

Though I argue that Hector's claims are a vital part of articulating uneven development, statistics show that his hypothesis is not entirely correct. It does seem as though city services increased in concert with middle-class reinvestment. For instance, in the last ten years, the city has resolved a much high number of residents' service requests for things like parking enforcement, trash collection, pot holes, and street light issues. Adjusting for population changes, there was a 383% percent increase in completed service requests from 2000 to 2009.¹⁰⁹

Though future resident satisfaction surveys were not publically available, the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. (MPDDC) released a study in 1999 showing that only 34% of residents in the third police district (of which Columbia Heights is a part) thought police responsiveness had improved. 66% of residents believed services stayed the same or were worse than the previous year. These statistics were congruent with citywide tallies, saying a good deal about residents' widespread dissatisfaction with the MPDDC.¹¹⁰ In other words, Hector's dissatisfaction is supported by the police department's own available data.

In other realms, Hector's belief that whites have improved resources is less founded. Specifically, public schools remain largely segregated by race and class. On average, traditional public schools in Columbia Heights are 41% Hispanic, 55% black, 2% Asian, and 2% white. Public charter schools in Columbia Heights report similar statistics: on average 38% Hispanic, 50% black, 11% white, and 1% Asian.¹¹¹ Though

household income figures were not readily available, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch provides a snapshot of the economic makeup of students: 73% in traditional public and 61% in public charter schools. These statistics show a change in the racial and ethnic makeup of residents attending public school; however, it points more to the influx of working-class Latina/o residents than the result of white-led gentrification.

The higher number of white students and students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch in public charter school hints at the increasing prestige of public charter schools, but these figures show that incoming white middle and upper-middle-class residents are primarily not enrolling children in the public school system.¹¹² Some residents are childless while others enroll children in private school. Though private schools are sometimes options for low-income residents through scholarships and voucher programs, they remain exclusive. As a note of comparison, Gonzaga College High School and Sidwell Friends School, two prestigious private schools in Washington, D.C. with yearly tuitions upwards of \$31,000, have 20% and 31% students of color, respectively.¹¹³ An increase in white middle and upper-middle-class residents has not been accompanied by significant white and/or middle-class enrollment in public schools.¹¹⁴

Even though this evidence challenges the accuracy of Hector's hypothesis, I argue that his beliefs are meaningful. Firstly the assumption that resource allocation is largely contingent on the influx of white people shows the symbolic value of whiteness in the urban landscape. Even if white people have not affected the schools significantly, it is telling that multiple respondents conceptualized whiteness as having superior value. This

assumption references anecdotal, material examples of white people receiving better treatment, but it also speaks to the felt inferiority of longtime residents of color. For Hector, it is frustrating to be implicitly told that, because of his racial and/or ethnic identification, his needs and desires are less of a priority. Despite disagreeing on the specific causes of change, most of the 19th street group agreed that, 20 or more years ago, they pleaded for more responsiveness from the city to no avail. While they enjoy the increase in services, all expressed varying degrees of disappointment that their requests were not as valuable as incoming residents’.

This perceived unresponsiveness has basis in fact. For instance, the Metro slated for Columbia Heights was once endangered because planners thought placing a station in Columbia Heights was “uneconomic” because local low-income residents would not provide the fare returns that suburban commuters would.¹¹⁵ In addition, planning rhetoric also reinforces longtime residents’ hypotheses about their second-class statuses. One such example is in the Washington, D.C. Economic Partnership’s “Columbia Heights Neighborhood Profile” from 2008. The public private organization sponsoring the flier promises that condo complexes like the upscale Kenyon Square and Highland Park complex “have all sparked new energy and excitement that Columbia Heights is ready to share.”¹¹⁶

Given the organization’s goal of attracting investment, it is not difficult to decode the euphemistic language: Columbia Heights has new, upscale consumers and is thus worthy of continued investment. Longtime residents are continually told by these narratives- narratives that are effectively echoed by newcomers, as seen in chapter three- that they are not as valuable as incoming residents. While particular theories forwarded

by residents about racist development may be exaggerated, linking whiteness to increased resources is a logical move that illustrates how deep structures of racism and classism permeate the landscape. Hector and others' comments show how vital ethnographic inquiries are in determining how development affects people. Sometimes analyzing how a resident is feeling is far more telling than examining demographic data alone.

At one point during my conversation with the 19th street crowd, Hector humorously brought up the (white) elephant in the room. Christina talked about the gradual improvement of schools in the area. Hector said, "I know you don't want to say it, but they're improving the schools because of my good friend here" and nodded in my direction. After a moment of confusion, I let the others know that the joke was that I myself was a white newcomer. His comment was not meant to be malicious, but its inherent critique was also not minimized even as our interpersonal bond was cemented through rapport.

This kind of joking acknowledgement, even with its lighthearted treatment of inequality, racism, and classism was a way to deal with tension and diffuse the awkwardness of interaction between neighbors with differential power. Even in that moment of diffusion and humor, it exhibited a candid testifying about the way things work (i.e. whites = resources) more so than the earnest but disjointed pleas for justice in official documents like the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Throughout conversations with my respondents, there were moments of rightful anger and tension, but the truth encoded in moments of ribbing also sheds insight on how these issues are dealt with everyday by residents who must negotiate home spaces that are also embattled in wars of territory and belonging. Hector illustrates how much more

astute residents are at addressing the problems around them than the official rhetoric of planning. These conversations provide useful lessons about how city officials and activists can learn from the “contact” of the street.

Some respondents also felt that the development that some believe to be the result of white, middle and upper-middle-class newcomers tended to be more upscale. While, like the newcomers I spoke to, most of the longtime residents praised the convenience and affordability of Target and Giant supermarket, there are several other businesses that seem off limits for certain residents. Loretta says that when she enters some of these places, such as the gourmet wine and beer shop and Starbucks, she feels surveilled. “Before you get in the door,” she recalls, they ask, “do you want anything?” especially if you’re black. ‘You want anything? You got to buy something to come in here.’ Duh, like I don’t know that? I’ve been here 99, 100 years. I want to see what they got here now. And the prices are ridiculous.” Not only is Loretta frustrated that it took the influx of upscale clientele to bring quality amenities, she also feels that many of the amenities that did come to the neighborhood were not intended for longtime residents, something their staff and prices make sure to make apparent. It is especially telling that Loretta uses hyperbole in her imagined interaction with the store clerk, saying she has been in the neighborhood for 100 years. In addition to expressing her heightened frustration, it ties her own individual experience with a larger narrative of the marginalization and neglect of working-class black residents who have called Columbia Heights home for decades.

Though Loretta’s experience is not uncommon, it does not prove that all working-class black residents are wary of incoming upscale amenities. Her sister Valerie likes having access to the commercial leisure the “new” Columbia Heights offers:

It's wonderful. I'm glad it's happened and I'm glad it's happening. I feel good today I can catch the bus or the Metro and go down on U street and get a mani and a pedi; go sit and have a cocktail and get some good food if I want to.... They have done a wonderful job revitalizing the area of Columbia Heights and I think it's wonderful. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else right now... but Atlanta, maybe Atlanta!

Valerie's comments highlight the importance of examining these reflections as simultaneously about race and class. The U Street corridor, Columbia Heights and Washington D.C. generally have historically been hubs of bourgeois black cultural and intellectual life. Part of the reason Valerie likes Columbia Heights is because of its ties with Northwest D.C.'s neighboring "gold coast" which has historically been populated by black professionals. Valerie's appreciation of the upscale lifestyle reentering Columbia Heights is not simply class aspiration, but a way to link to her own experience with that of the political and cultural legacy of the black middle-class. Though intraracial class dynamics are fraught with inequitable power, they also exist in a context that has historically constructed blackness as universally poor, irresponsible, and pathological.

Alternate Accumulation: Gentrification and its Partial Benefits

Though the majority of critical studies of gentrification focus on the end result of displacement along racial and class lines, one thing my respondents made clear was that often times gentrification provided economic opportunities that have made their lives better. Two of the primary ways respondents benefitted were through rising property values that gave their families the opportunity to sell and move to the suburbs and by getting the chance to pass on now highly valued property to their sons and daughters.

Moving out to the suburbs offered an opportunity to buy into the American dream of suburban home ownership. Many moved to neighboring Prince George's County, a

predominantly African American county with pockets of working-class enclaves. Though working-class and African American suburban enclaves have long been part of the suburban landscape, redlining, restrictive covenants and other forms of state-sponsored discrimination have also shaped that landscape.¹¹⁷ Moving to the suburbs represented an opportunity to reap the benefits of suburban living (e.g. more space) and to challenge dominant representation of the suburb as white, exclusive, and not for people of color.¹¹⁸

Similarly, passing property on to their offspring allowed Columbia Heights residents to give their children a foundation for a more financially secure future. As George Lipsitz and others have argued, systemic racism ubiquitous in housing, education, and employment sectors has stifled blacks' ability to accumulate wealth and pass that wealth on to future generations.¹¹⁹ Accumulation of wealth and the intergenerational transfer of wealth is the primary way white Americans have been able to ascend to the middle and upper-classes.

Eric, for instance, bought his house from his parents for a fraction of what it is now worth. He explains, "It's safe to say as the Caucasians moved in it seemed like the property value goes up. So the ones that are left, like us African Americans that are left in the city, you know, we got ours... I bought my house back in 1999 just before the housing market had skyrocketed." Eric acknowledges that it has since plummeted, but has been making a steady rise as the burst bubble temporarily repairs. Jeff also bought his house from his parents for under \$50,000. He remembers his reaction to incoming white neighbors paying \$160,000 and up: "ah! We're rich!" he jokingly recalled.

Valerie is worried that the neighborhood real estate has gotten "so expensive," but is impressed that the house her grandmother bought in the 1950s for \$35,000 is now

worth over a half a million dollars. She tells me that the intergenerational transfer of deeds has been the norm in this area of Columbia Heights with a high concentration of single-family homes:

Back in, I'm going to say 2000... I'm going to say from 2000 up until 2007... 2005. For five years, Caucasians came back in the city and they- older people- some of them have passed away. They sold their houses and a lot of the seniors and their siblings didn't want to keep their homes if you will. etc. etc. So therefore, the market was really good from 2000 until I'm going to say 2005.

Valerie's synopsis of the market illustrates the upside to gentrification, but also illustrates that Columbia Heights was only valued when enough white people moved in to allay investors' fears of investing in a majority black working-class neighborhood.

These opportunities counteract some of the systemic oppression faced by working-class residents of color. They are moments of resistance to not only the economic processes of urban development, but to cultural assumptions of poverty, lack of agency, and pathology. These residents worked a system built on marginalization to give themselves and their families a better life. Charting these collateral effects of gentrification prevent scholarly narratives of gentrification from naming residents as solely victims or beneficiaries in the process. On the other hand, these economic opportunities cannot be overstated in narratives that conceptualize gentrification as a "win-win" situation for those moving in and those moving out.

These stories of financial opportunity are not universal. Most lower middle-class and working-class urban residents are renters and thus do not hold property equity that appreciates with the neighborhood. In fact, not only do they not have the opportunity to gain wealth, they are most likely going to lose more money as their landlords- who *are* benefitting from increased values- demand more rent to keep up with rising taxes.

Furthermore, my respondents were able to, for the time being, afford the property taxes on their homes. This is something not all homeowners could do and something that may threaten owners' ability to keep the investment in the future. In addition to issues of affordability and the relative uniqueness of homeownership, these respondents' economic opportunity are tempered by two other major factors.

First, multigenerational wealth is typically maintained via a multigenerational investment. Even though the respondents I spoke to made a profit in real estate, that profit is limited if they cash out and leave the investment and neighborhood behind. As I will discuss, many respondents did in fact feel pressured to leave the neighborhood, heightening the likelihood that the newfound real estate profit would be liquidated, failing to produce long-lasting investment and intergenerational wealth transfer.

Secondly, respondents told me that they and some of their previous neighbors had been pressured to sell early on when speculation in Columbia Heights ramped up. While some stayed and enjoyed rising values, many others cashed out for far less than the profits reaped by investors coming in on their coattails. While market forces do not deliver universal deficits for longtime working-class residents of color, the very process is still designed to exploit property owners in disinvested areas. If longtime residents do not sell their property below expected value, the property would not have as much of a profit margin. Therefore, residents cannot enjoy equal profits from the reinvestment process because the reinvestment process is only attractive and profitable because of its sell cheap, buy cheap, sell high formula. While longtime residents are privy to some appreciated value, they are still excluded from having the capital and access to become investors on a par with incoming residents and developers.

Gender adds yet another lens through which to examine issues of wealth acquisition. Because they arrived in the 1990s, April and Elizabeth straddle the line between “newcomer” and “longtimer” due to the different waves of gentrification, but both were seen by some as gentrifiers upon their arrival. Their cultural and economic marginalization as single women, however, complicates assumptions that white-led gentrification involves universally powerful people claiming the territory of marginalized people. Their gender marginalization does not automatically absolve them in the process of marginalization along lines of race and class, but it does reveal the entangled intersections of difference that shape the built environment.

While talking to the 19th street residents, they told me that most of the white newcomers that had moved into the neighborhood in the late 1990s were single women. I asked some of these women about their decision to come to their neighborhood and what they thought of the pattern. It was especially interesting that white women were moving into a majority-black neighborhood commonly perceived as dangerous, given the cultural assumptions surrounding white women as victims of black masculine aggression.

Elizabeth told me:

Not many women would have purchased this house back 11 years ago.... My father came to see me right after that... He lasted a half hour in that house watching kids circling on bicycles and everything. And went home and told my mom.... Can you imagine the street 11 years ago, bringing your father seeing his only daughter live in this neighborhood. And I'm from a town of 5000 people, so no diversity whatsoever back then.

For Elizabeth, moving into the neighborhood was an opportunity to afford real estate as a struggling single, female professional. It was the only thing she could afford on one income and subsequently adopted a nonchalant attitude towards the neighborhood and the violence that surrounded her.

Though Elizabeth's parents were offput by her disregard for gendered notions of safety and propriety and though she was the victim of multiple muggings- one such experience is analyzed in more depth in chapter five- she never stopped calling Columbia Heights home. While Elizabeth's discussion of the gritty neighborhood does fit with white newcomers' quest for credibility and authenticity in the gentrifying city, it is simultaneously a testament to Elizabeth's transgression of the boundaries that have restricted her movement as a woman in urban space.

I asked April to put on her "sociologist hat" and discuss what might account for the high number of single women owning homes in the neighborhood. She postulated,

sociologically, it would be interesting to study trends in other cities, but it's the lower end economic thing. We don't make big salaries. As single women we have to decide, do we want to live in a thing this big [makes small box] or will we take a house in a crazy neighborhood because we don't make \$100,000 a year? In my own case, it was creating diversity at the time because I was the diverse person coming in. But I wouldn't have had this house unless it had been a HUD house. It was the federal government, but the city has those auctions, they used to anyway.

At the same time April was receiving money from a program that disproportionately helped middle-class white people, she was also using it to give herself an advantage in a market that was sexist and couplish. These maneuvers were explicitly conceptualized as acts that subverted gender discrimination. April at one point linked her struggle to find adequate housing/investments to the long history of the economic marginalization of women, reminding me that women in the not-too-distant past needed their husband to sign off on a credit card application. These reflections do not counter-act one another. Their marginalized status as women does not erase their racial and class privilege. Power is relational and Elizabeth and April's experiences illustrate that different power struggles carry on simultaneously.

All of my respondents agreed that rising values did threaten the affordability of the neighborhood. The crisis of affordability often manifested itself in residents' perceived mobility. Though many of the homeowners I spoke with were glad that their properties had become more valuable, they felt trapped. If they did sell, many feared they would not be able to come back. The price of wealth accumulation is an inability to choose one's neighborhood freely. My respondents were all happy to call Columbia Heights home, but were frustrated that they did not have the option to leave and come back.

My respondents' fears are backed by the material reality of rising housing prices and property tax, but their concern also links to what Lance Freeman has called the "specter of displacement." In his ethnographic study of gentrification he notes that, despite little evidence that displacement was occurring:

a specter of displacement still hung in the air. I attribute this fear of displacement despite not necessarily facing the immediate threat to two things- a meaning of displacement beyond personal movements and the potentially catastrophic nature of the moving experience. to some of the residents of Clinton Hill and Harlem that I spoke with, however, displacement also has the broader connotation of being "pushed out" and losing one's community.¹²⁰

Displacement threatens more than economic wellbeing. It also puts residents on the losing side of a cultural war of territory. If a resident is actively being encouraged to leave and if they cannot return of their own volition, their sense of belonging in that space is threatened.

Eric sums up how African Americans have been affected by shifting notions of urban and suburban life as follows:

I think what happened a lot of these elderly people that got old, sick, and died off, they sold their property. The Caucasians, they start seeing... you

know, they're working in the District, they start moving back into the city as you can see all over the city.... Because at one time back in the 70s, you know, everybody wanted to go out to the suburbs. But now everybody is trying to get back into the city. So it flip flops from now to the past. If you got a little money, the first place African Americans... "I'm going to Maryland!" She's out in Maryland. Now, Maryland is like the old D.C.

Eric laughs, acknowledging the ways in which African Americans have been able to pursue the dream of the suburbs but also recognizing how African Americans always seem to be on the less-valued end of any real estate trend. I ask Eric and the group if they think a lot of black Washingtonians were still trying to move to Prince George's County (the neighboring suburban county in Maryland.) Both he and Hector answer that they thought it currently had less to do with choice and more to do with being forced out. "Not trying," Hector says. "They're not trying to go on their own. I think they're being pushed out there." Eric concurs, saying that. "most of them are forced out."

Jeff also chimes in, agreeing: "That's it. They left and they *can't* come back." Hector feels this way about his own place in the neighborhood. "If I were ever to leave," he posits, "I can't come back. Can't ever come back." He pauses and jokes, "unless I become famous for whatever reason." As always, Hector's humor is underlined with frustration. His wife Christina later shares her similar frustration with me:

If I move out of [Columbia Heights], I could ever afford to come back in here. Never.... With changes, a lot of people that lived around here moved on, took advantage of selling their houses for a good price and you know, moved on.... I would never think about moving out of here because I would never be able to move back.

Despite having unprecedented access to capital, lower middle-class and working class residents like Hector and Christina are forced to choose between community and profit, a concern that newcomers do not have to worry about. They were able to afford to move into the neighborhood and renovate their current house, illustrating a certain amount of

class mobility. On some level, they may be considered part of the “newcomers” that came in with the earlier wave of gentrification. They are not, however, wealthy enough to be able to afford to buy property in Columbia Heights at present levels.

For lower middle-class residents like Hector and Christina and for working class residents especially, activating the wealth tied to their real estate forfeits their rights as community members of Columbia Heights. Newcomers that can afford current prices may lack “authenticity” in the neighborhood, but their material assets and mobility can give them more power and influence in the neighborhood. They may never be able to get the respect of longtime residents, but these newcomers will be able to come into and leave Columbia Heights as they please. Most longtime residents don’t have the option to leave and come back, an especially hard fact for those who do feel as though they have been living in Columbia Heights long enough to proudly call it their home.

Hector believes that the people who decide to leave have it good. “If they don't come back,” he says, “it's nice if they can sell their houses here and buy something somewhere else. But there's a way of pushing some people out. Tempting to move just because of the kind of money you could get for your property now. So there's a way of pushing you out; pushing the minorities out.” For Hector, the relatively positive experience of getting more money for one’s house has been used to manipulate longtime residents into leaving the neighborhood and doing so while their house can still be a profitable investment opportunity for newcomers.

Hector’s comments illustrate residents’ awareness of the racial and class marginalization in the gentrification process. They also show that residents do not conceptualize this process as neutral or haphazard. This is not the free market at work,

bringing a “renaissance” to the neighborhood. It is intentional grab for territory. In Hector and others’ estimation, longtime residents are purposefully coaxed out to make room for more valued newcomers. It is a process that benefits middle and upper-middle-class residents at the expense of providing protections and resources to longtime residents of color. The clarity of their reflections is in sharp relief from planning rhetoric that does not explicate the connection between gentrification and discrimination. While planning documents obscure the correlation with “best of times, worst of times” rhetoric, the longtime residents I spoke with knew exactly what was happening.

Like our conversations about city services, conversations about displacement intersperse fact with the articulation of feeling. Residents’ present persuasive anecdotal evidence that displacement is a very real possibility if it is not already happening. Prices are rising and they know that they would be unable to return should they have to leave. Some residents knew neighbors who were pressured to leave. There is shared body of knowledge surrounding displacement. This knowledge asserts the reality of displacement, challenging narratives (from planning documents, newcomers, and elsewhere) that downplay its occurrence. That shared knowledge is not something that can be quantified and its existence is another reason why ethnographic inquiry is an important part of charting the urban built environment.

To speak that truth, even if it does not translate to a radical shift in how development works, is a powerful form of resistance. It remaps Columbia Heights and ideologically reclaims it on their terms. At a basic level, it makes residents feel better to articulate their marginalization. My respondents, once we warmed up to one another, were eager to tell me how things really went. In doing so, whether by telling a researcher

or a new neighbor, they publicly assert that they are not being duped by official rhetoric. They may not be able to change the ubiquitous neoliberal processes that shape Columbia Heights, but they can destabilize the rhetoric that supports it. That fight helps their sense of agency and has the potential to change people's minds about what kind of neighborhood Columbia Heights should be.

The reality of displacement is contested, but studies such as Lance Freeman's have not definitively shown displacement is an exaggerated bogeyman. Scholars such as Tom Slater have countered arguments that gentrification critiques overstate displacement.¹²¹ Even if that evidence was not contested, the *fear* of displacement is meaningful. Some of my respondents' concerns about displacement underline a general unease about their place in the neighborhood. They feel as though the city is not doing enough to protect them, instead ignoring them in favor of incoming investors.

These feelings are not just abstract thoughts. They have physical manifestations. As Ruth Bergman argues in her study of displaced residents in Pittsburgh, displacement narratives gleaned from ethnographic analysis can uniquely "authenticate claims of long-term emotional, psychological and social distress."¹²² When talking to me about possible displacement, Christina and Valerie became visibly shaken and sad. That anxiety is a casualty of uneven development. It is also proof of the material effects of dominant narratives that support gentrification. By reinforcing who matters and who does not, public planning documents that drive private investment are implicated in the anxiety residents feel. Respondents' unease is part of how rhetoric affects the material environment. Just as planning documents shape space, so to do they shape residents' physical and emotional health.

For some longtime residents, conversations about displacement were again influenced by ideas about value: namely, who was valued in the neighborhood and who was not. The fear of displacement shows that longtime residents know what kind of people were being privileged in the development process. They know that the celebration of diverse Columbia Heights is untenable. And while the planning literature may express concern for gentrification, residents know that the city is dismantling the remaining social safety nets for longtime residents.

This alternative knowledge, based in feeling and experience, shows that residents resist dominant narratives that devalue their presence (often based on race and class). That residents “know the score” challenges the dominant map of Columbia Heights. This knowledge is sometimes deployed through official avenues. Residents have gone to numerous local meetings to demand better representation. Creating a counter-discourse of distrust recovers a history of abuses that can bolster demands for more inclusive planning. However, even if these conversations never leave the stoops on which they are uttered, they still do important work. The stories threaten the stability of the dominant map used to coax inequitable investment. In other words, it becomes harder to invest in multicultural harmony, when a group of well-mannered but angry residents are ready to tell you the real story.

Contorting Difference: Rhetorics of Diversity in Neoliberal Context

Planning rhetoric in the 1990s and 2000s also reinforced mainstreamed rhetorics of multiculturalism. The mainstream rhetoric of multiculturalism shared some language with civil rights rhetoric, but the multiculturalism often failed to forward a critique of

continued oppression based on difference. In his analysis of city boosterism in Los Angeles, sociologist Dennis Downey shows that multiculturalism became an integral part of how cities were conceptualized in official rhetoric. This brand of multiculturalism was more akin to the “food and festival” multiculturalism taking hold in the 1990s. This incarnation of multiculturalism, as discussed in chapter one, appropriated some of the language of earlier movements but divorced the rhetoric from a demand to dismantle systemic oppression perpetuated by hierarchies of difference. It was fundamentally different than an earlier discussion of difference and empowerment forwarded by early feminist, civil rights, and anti-colonial social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Downey argues that, “the original linkage between cultural and structural transformation fundamental to anti-colonial movements was stretched so thin that the suggestion of the former was unlikely to attract the vehement affective responses from those who opposed such radical transformations.”¹²³

This superficial commitment to diversity can be seen throughout Washington D.C. and Columbia Heights’ official planning literature. The celebration of D.C.’s diversity is seen most obviously in the images accompanying plans such as the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* of 2006. One of the first pages of the plan shows a map of Washington D.C. made entirely of images of a rainbow of faces enjoying life in the district (Figure 38).¹²⁴ Their images show a distinct representational equality of white residents and residents of color. Under the rubric of multiculturalism, the almost exclusive presentation of bodies of color that marked earlier planning imagery has been replaced with a harmonious mixture of old and new, black, Latina/o, and white. A similar photo map of diverse residents also accompanies the *Columbia Heights Public Realm*

Framework published in 2004 (Figure 39).¹²⁵ Though this diverse presentation represents the demographic reality of contemporary Washington D.C., in doing so it implicitly validates the inequitable development that has been so closely tied with the arrival of middle and upper-middle-class white residents.

Citizens of Columbia Heights also used the language of multiculturalism to define their neighborhood. The report summarizing the charrette held to solicit input for the development of the parcels adjacent to the Columbia Heights Metro station includes residents' descriptors for the neighborhood. They include adjectives such as "multi-cultural," "kaleido-cultural," "mix of faces," "melting pot," "multi-ethnic," and "tolerance." Included in this summary is visual proof of that sentiment, showing engaged residents of different races and ethnicities happily working together (Figure 40, 41).¹²⁶

As I discuss throughout this dissertation, valuing diversity is not inherently problematic. That residents appreciate the demographic variety of their neighborhood presents the potential for spaces that engender cooperation and coalition. The rhetoric of celebratory diversity, however, is often presented in a way that reinforces hierarchies of difference. Lisa Duggan and scholars such as sociologist Jiannbin Lee Shiao and Sara Ahmed have argued that this embrace of multiculturalism is not only not necessarily a predictor of increased equity for marginalized groups, but that institutionalized multiculturalism often has more to do with the inequitable generation of profit.¹²⁷



Figure 40. Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Metro Station Area Community-Based Plan*, 1997, p10.
(Courtesy of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.)

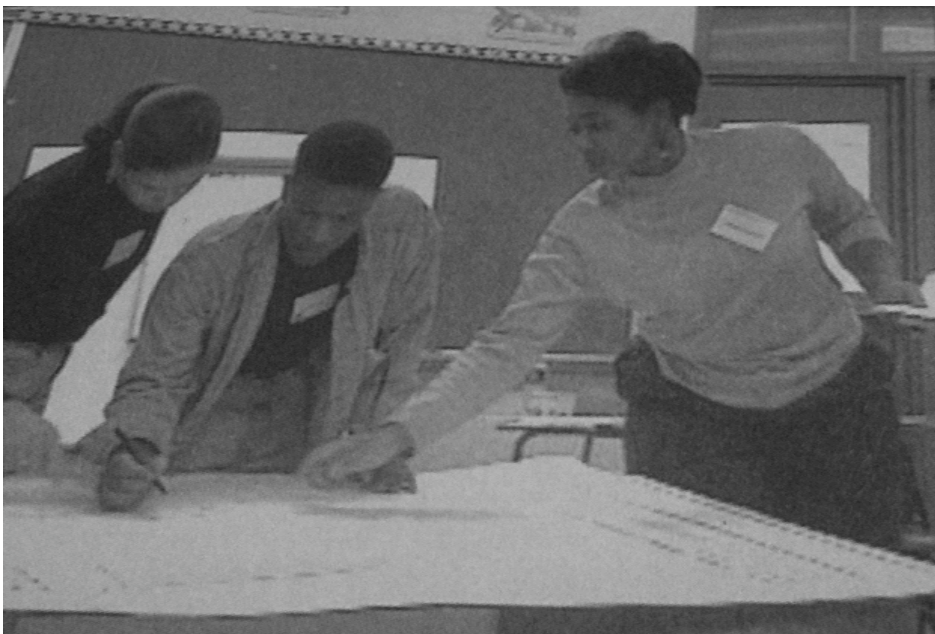


Figure 41. Washington, D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Metro Station Area Community-Based Plan*, 1997, p6.
(Courtesy of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.)

I turn to *The Public Realm Framework of Columbia Heights*, published in 2004, to illustrate how the language of diversity is used to circumvent critiques of inequality and perpetuate upward redistribution. It is the culmination of the work of the D.C. Office of Planning and several public meetings and workshops with some members of the public. The purpose of the report is to propose plans for public spaces that improve amenities and ensure a strong neighborhood identity. The Public Realm plan acknowledges the diversity of the neighborhood, but makes two key rhetorical moves that distance racial, ethnic, and class diversity from attendant issues such as resource distribution.

Firstly, the plan relegates racial, ethnic, and class diversity to the realm of art and representation. Though the plan is necessarily concerned with the built environment, it signals a disproportionate discussion of difference outside discussions of politics and economics. As the caption underneath a local mural in the report summarizes, “the neighborhood’s identity is represented in its art (Figure 42).”¹²⁸ This simple statement seems innocuous, but it is hard to grapple with inequality when difference is rhetorically linked exclusively with art, tourism, and celebration rather than resource allocation, social services, and the acknowledgment of inequity among residents of color and/or working class and poor residents. The neighborhood’s identity is partially represented in its art, but it is also represented by its people and the development that has taken place there.



The Neighborhood's identity is represented in its art

Figure 42. Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework*, 2004, pES.1.

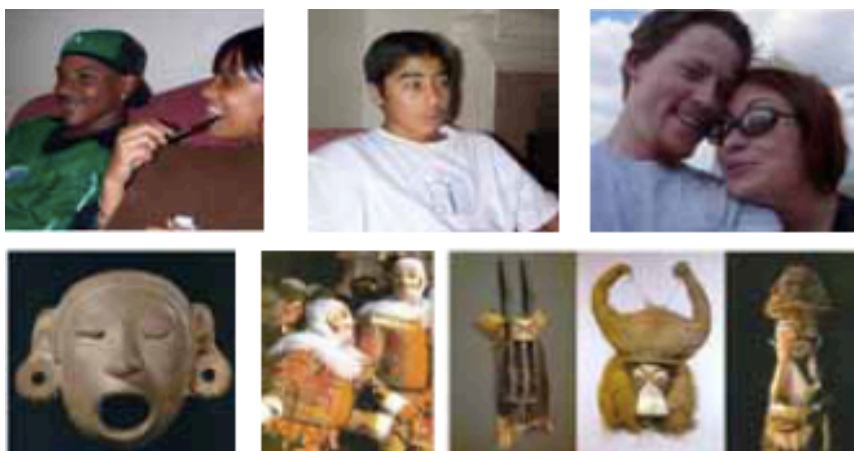
The report ends with two public art proposals from white artists that both aim to convey the neighborhood's demographic diversity through representation. Neither proposal was chosen in full. An abstract design with flecks of multiculturalism was eventually implemented (Figure 43) with some smaller mosaic placed on the pavement throughout the area (Figure 44). But the proposals are both useful in that they reveal how difference is discussed in contemporary planning literature. Jann Queralt-Rosen proposed to use a series of resident portraits to commemorate transformation and multicultural tradition (Figure 45).¹²⁹ Steven Weitzman's streetscape project employs a series of mosaics that use abstract patterns to represent the diverse national origin of residents (Figure 46).¹³⁰ The danger of a disproportionate engagement with racial and ethnic difference in the realm of art and culture is that it becomes something of a cultural commodity stripped of critiques of marginalization.



**Figure 43. Columbia Heights “Park Triangle” area at the corners of Park Rd., 14th St., and Kenyon St., NW.
(Photo by the author)**



**Figure 44. Smaller mosaic featured around the Columbia Heights Metro Station area.
(Photo by the author)**



Community Portraits and Masks - Image Examples: Residents, Ethnographic Masks and Festivals



Figure 45. Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework*, 2004, pA.2.



Figure 46. Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework*, 2004, pA.3.

Though Queralt-Rosen's use of multi-ethnic bodies is culled from interviews she conducted with local youth of color and though she purports to represent the voices of local residents of color, the end result is aesthetic presentation of black and brown faces. Similarly, in Weitzman's project the complex cultures of the neighborhood are filtered into abstract patterns. In both cases, the artist presents an argument for why these images promote respect for different races and ethnicities. The aestheticization of racial and ethnic diversity in a project concurrent with the upscaling of the neighborhood, however, toes the line between the representation of diverse subjectivities and commodification. These images do not reference marginalization, nor do they give voice to the multiracial and multiethnic residents of Columbia Heights. I argue that, though reception is varied

and complicated, it is important to recognize the potential of these projects to appropriate difference as a way to promote Columbia Heights's image as a multicultural, artistic space ideal for middle and upper-middle class residents.

The Public Realm Framework's abstraction is also linked to the city's move towards cultural tourism, using D.C.'s African American and Latino history as a chance to bring revenue to the city.¹³¹ This has been championed as a major component of the *Comprehensive Plan* for the city.¹³² Difference is flattened and becomes an economic value rather than something that reflects the differentially powerful, demographically diverse residents of the city. Instead, the conversation about difference is pushed to the realm of the cultural where it is to be consumed and celebrated.

The public realm plan also uses diversity rhetoric to silence dissent. It sets out to create a "unified community identity for Columbia Heights."¹³³ The plan focuses on sameness as an ideal and achievable goal. Difference, in the sense of discord and of distinct social markers, is left on the other side of the binary, squelching expressions of difference that do not fit into a narrow narrative of celebration. Jann Rosen-Querlt's artist's statement hits the idea of diversity stripped of difference home: "I believe that if there were a way to encourage the awareness of individual similarities, we would have a more cohesive urban environment. An environment based on likeness rather than difference is a goal to strive for."¹³⁴ While her intention is to create harmony, it relies on logic of elision rather than substantive engagement with the issues that can create tension. Time and again, the celebration of diversity is employed for a larger goal of shutting down dissent. A celebration implies the war has come to an end and hierarchies should no longer be discussed.

Beneath the Celebration: Residents' Selective Praise of Diversity

Like the residents in attendance at the charrette, my respondents praised the diversity of the neighborhood. Though Elizabeth is white, she disassociates herself from the perceived homogenous ethos of some white residents, saying, “it's the diversity that makes this place interesting. Once you get in it, it would be very hard to live in a white-bread neighborhood now.”

Some claimed that there was little tension between different groups despite the way race and class affected development in the neighborhood. Hector also told me:

Columbia Heights now I think is the coolest place just because there's no... really there's not discrimination about anybody. If you can hold your own? You're fine. You're not judged on how you look or whatever. It's just like how you maintain yourself so that is a great thing.

Hector hopes that city does more to protect the diverse mix of white, black and Hispanics in the area, but adds “I know that it's not going to happen. But it is a wishful thinking on my part. I know that it's unacceptable. Money talks.” His comments reference the link between race and class status. As prices rise and class diversity is forced out, residents of color- the residents that make up Columbia Heights's low-income population- will also disappear.

Hector repeats the rhetoric of celebration and equality seen in planning documents, at first arguing that everything is great. His praise, however, belies tension below the surface. Time and again, respondents' first reaction was to reiterate well-worn narratives of multicultural harmony, a script passed down from urban planning rhetoric and from dominant culture and its exclamations of the “post-race” world.¹³⁵ Despite the ubiquity of these celebratory narratives, though, many respondents soon began talking

more candidly about race and class in Columbia Heights. The key was to listen beyond initial claims, waiting for the more frank discussion of the neighborhood that almost always followed.

Some black respondents resented the influx of undocumented Latina/os, lamenting the perceived loss of resources and sense of community among blacks in the neighborhood. Valerie explains:

Most people that live here in the city are black, white, and Hispanic whereby we used to be the minority and now the Hispanics are. They make up maybe 45% of the city. A lot of them are here illegally. That's another thing: when we were talking about nonsense and the mess with Fenty and people on the council and all the rhetoric that goes on daily. What are they going to do about people coming here illegally? You know, come on. I mean I'm human. We all want somewhere to live. But what happens... we're paying taxes. You give people more than people that have lived here all their lives. That's why a lot of older people don't like Fenty.

Loretta expresses similar concerns, framing blacks and Hispanics as opponents in the fight for dwindling state resources and private sector jobs. She tells me, “used to be a lot of blacks in construction, but you don't see many blacks in construction now. They bring them over here and bring all their family to work with them. And they work hard and cheaper. So if they work hard and cheaper, then that's who they're going to hire.”

Despite their reinforcement of racial hierarchies vis a vis framing blacks as more deserving of resources, it is also important to understand the context of their complaints. For Valerie and Loretta, the influx of undocumented Latina/os receiving jobs, housing, and social services represents the city's neglect of the black community. Their stereotyping of Latina/o residents, many who are here legally, simultaneously reveals their felt superiority and their own sense of powerlessness as marginalized women of color. Valerie and Loretta's comments articulate a sense of economic marginalization in

addition to a loss of pride and belonging associated with living in a “chocolate” city once celebrated as a majority-black cultural hub.

Some respondents of color relied on class hierarchies to define themselves against other residents of color. These comments were sometimes a matter-of-fact distinction between respondents’ own working-class identification and low-income residents. While describing his experience in the neighborhood Jeff recalls, “when you think about the 80s- early 80s, mid 80s: Clifton Terrace, Garfield Terrace [two public housing complexes] things that went on: we were caught in the middle of this mess.” This disassociation with low-income residents of color was sometimes more adamant. Valerie unpacks her mixed feelings about low-income residents saying:

Low is not always bad. Low is good when people are on disability insurance and they get low-income and just because they're low-income doesn't make them less of. Everybody that came out of the hood is not always hood-y. You know so you're not going to have me move to Southeast just because I know the area. I don't want to be around certain... you want to be around people that are like you.....You want to be around people who have just as much common sense and class as you have. It just makes for a good day. It is what it is. I'm not moving to Southeast. Why should I put myself in harm's way?

Valerie believes that low-income people should not be stigmatized, but her comments also reinforce a deserving poor narrative that stigmatizes some residents. Her reflections illustrate intraracial class tension, but they also articulate the complex push and pull between racial solidarity and wanting to enjoy the personal safety and comfort afforded by a certain amount of class privilege.

Sandra, a black upper-middle-class lawyer, talked about her negotiation of intraracial class difference with some regret. “Whenever my daughter would mess up in [private] school,” she recalls, “I would use the local school as ‘where are you going to go

next year if you don't get your stuff together there? You're going walk your butt right down to Cardozo [the local public high school].... And I would drive her right past it and say, 'This is where you're going next year. You want to go here?'" Over the course of our conversation, Sandra expresses concern for the wellbeing of low-income residents in the neighborhood. She cares about the success of low-income, black Washingtonians. Simultaneously, she also fights to protect her own privilege, sometimes at the rhetorical expense of low-income blacks.

Most respondents did not criticize the influx of whites explicitly. Part of this silence most likely has to do with my own social location. As Hector's joke made clear, I fit into the category of the professional-class, educated, white newcomer. Furthermore, though I did not discuss my sexuality with anyone except Valerie, I can potentially be read as queer.¹³⁶ It makes sense respondents of color would hold their tongue when discussing their feelings about Columbia Heights newcomers. Despite my limitations as a researcher, displeasure with incoming residents did surface in subtle ways. I found a coded resentment of incoming whites when some respondents spoke of seemingly apolitical things like the neighborhood's influx of condos, "single people," and people with dogs.

Valerie finds some newcomers unfriendly, but her comments about their personality are also imbued with a comment about class. She explains:

well, people who live in condos are people who are basically single people or people who want to cohabitate together as the old school say, 'shack together.' I don't see it very family oriented, if you will....This is a city, here in Columbia Heights, where people are like the attitude... like very cosmopolitan, you know iPod, 'hey what's happening,' you know, on the go, movers and shakers. I can see it becoming more fast-paced. No one wants to talk to you because they have something stuck in their ears listening to their music. People are not as friendly.

The unfriendliness of these people are rhetorically linked with their lifestyle choices and classed personal possessions, all of which reflect the youth oriented, creative class aesthetic associated with the target market for the “new,” more upscale Columbia Heights. As Valerie has stated earlier, she enjoys some of the more upscale things coming into the neighborhood, but she dislikes when the distinction associated with that lifestyle makes her feel alienated from her neighbors.

Valerie also jokes that she sees more dogs than kids. Her privileging of families could be resentment towards all the increasingly young transient people moving into Columbia Heights. It could be a reflection of more traditional, normative idealization of family life rather than the fast-paced, young professional lifestyle of delayed coupling and cohabitation. It may also be a coded reference to those who are outside of the family ideal because they are queer, especially given the undeniable influx of white gay men in the last 15 years. Though Valerie did not make any specific reference to the white gay male population that have been a major part of (though not the cause of, as I discuss in chapter four) the neighborhood’s gentrification, her signifiers can all be related to the stereotype of the incoming white gay men: dogs instead of kids, cohabitation without marriage, and perceived bachelor/ette status.

Though her feelings about sexuality remain latent throughout our conversations, in a follow up interview she explicitly links whiteness to this new group of unfriendly people. “I’m talking about white people,” she says. “They been here five minutes, and you were mentioning something about tension? They be like, I’ve been here 50 years. And I’m like, no, I’ve been here 51. You need to ask me some questions. Some directions.... They just run like they got it going on. They got five people living in

condos with them. The parents got big bank.” In addition to naming race as a specific dimension that causes tension, she also identifies the lack of communication and respect newcomers offer her. As someone who has been living in the neighborhood all her life, Valerie sees this as insult to her and to residents similarly invested in fostering a strong sense of community within Columbia Heights.

The material artifacts most rhetorically tied to undesirable newcomers are condos. When I asked respondents what they did not want to see Columbia Heights turn into, many said they did not want any more condos. Gesturing to the majority single-family homes on the block, Christina says she wants to make sure that “we don’t get all these condos in all these houses.” Her neighbors Elizabeth and April offer some insight as to why condos are so reviled, relaying stories about their recent condo-dwelling neighbors who have been unfriendly and disinterested in becoming part of the close-knit 19th street “family.”

It became clear talking to both longtime white residents and longtime residents of color that all incoming white people were not conceptualized as the same. There was a distinct difference between white residents who moved into Columbia Heights in the 1990s and those that have moved within the last five years. Rachel says that the white neighbors she has had since the 1990s “ain’t going nowhere. They suffered.” She laughs and explains, “They have just as much disdain for the newer white people.” She tells stories of white neighbors who used to have open houses with refreshments upon moving to the neighborhood in the early 1990s. They actively tried to get to know the residents who had lived in Columbia Heights for decades.

Later in our conversation, Rachel elaborates on why some of the incoming residents sadden her:

I think that even if they knew the character of the Neighborhood... like, there's a group across the street, and I'm like, "do you know you're living in the first black governor's house? Do you know you're living next door to the brother of Dr. Billie Taylor who is *renowned*, world-famous jazz artist?" You sort of just want to say... but even if you gave the nugget of truth to them, they wouldn't milk it for what it's rich for. It would be the elitist sort of: "oh I purchased." It wouldn't be "Damn! This is a cultural! Bam bam bam! I might see Dr. Billie Taylor walk up and down these streets a couple times once it gets warm visiting his brother. I can pimp him for tickets to so and so!" I want something different from them than I think they want. Maybe they just want a place to lay their head.... They just don't have the point of reference to be able to milk and enjoy or understand where they are.... Again, I don't mean to be defeatist but it's sort of like educate....For what? Hip them to it for what? I don't know.

For Rachel, the key distinction between newly arrived residents and longtime residents lies in an understanding and respect for the history of the neighborhood. It is about making an effort to understand the area's rich cultural history and role in black cultural production.

Residents' status as owners or renters most likely plays a role in fostering a sense of belonging. Most residents who arrived in the 1990s bought their homes, whereas many of the incoming residents are renters. As urban ethnographers such as Mary Patillo and Lance Freeman have argued, owners tend to have more cultural and political influence and also tend to be more involved in the development of their neighborhoods.¹³⁷

Rachel's comments, however, reveal that this is not always the dividing line between good and bad neighbor. As she says, some newcomers do own and this can lead to an elitist posturing. They give the sense that have earned the right not to talk to their neighbors or worse, that they are better than their neighbors because they have paid more to be in Columbia Heights.

Some of my white respondents also expressed disdain for incoming white residents. April tells me:

I felt safer in the early 90s walking around. People were friendly, everyone said hello to you and stuff. And now there's just so many white people moving in that just kind of walk past you. They're not as friendly. And then people will come to prey like in Georgetown, places. I don't know.

She fears that too much of an influx of these unfriendly white people would lead to the hyper-gentrification that turned Georgetown from a working-class black enclave to the bastion of the white, upper crust of Washington, D.C.

Elizabeth then disagrees, asserting that the neighborhood was and still is relatively unsafe. But April clarifies that, "I'm just saying the perception... people sitting on the stoop. Black people don't sit on their porch steps in Adams Morgan as much. And they'll assume those are gang members and they'll be scared to walk by." She references the lack of public sociability among newcomers and even ties it to a cultural difference along the lines of race. The stoop/porch networking favored by longtime black residents and continued with many of the whites moving to the block in the 1990s, has been rejected for private backyard gathering favored by incoming whites. Backyard culture has threatened the social cohesion of the neighborhood.

Given April and Elizabeth's dynamic and thoughtful role in their block's social network, their comments reflect the importance of creating a supportive neighborhood in which people look out for other people. Difference and power will never be removed from the equation. April and Elizabeth's role in this network of support, however, shows that people embroiled in larger conflicts along lines of difference do not automatically have to reinforce a transcript of inequality and marginalization in their day to day interactions.

I argue that, in addition to discussions of macro political economy, it is vital to explore the potential of intra-group socializing. April and Elizabeth's behavior *is* distinct from incoming residents who ignore historically marginalized residents. It may not be radically different and may potentially cover over larger structures of power. However, given the mostly frank comments all respondents made about the role race and class played in the process, I view these interactions as rich sites of conversation that gesture toward the potential of more equitable urban areas.

Like a Good Neighbor: The Politics of Personality and Contact

Many of my respondents explicitly told me that the tension in Columbia Heights had more to do with being a good neighbor than about race or class. Elizabeth thinks "it really has a lot to do with a person's personality. And I think the personality is what enables us to get here. If you were skittish and used to certain communities like that guy who came from Georgetown today, you're not going to come here. So that whole element of the outgoing personality is not there." Beyond social location, a supportive neighborhood is built on exhibiting mutual respect. It is about asking questions. It is about helping one another. It is about not performing a sense of superiority.

Examining individual interaction requires a simultaneous examination of how difference is engaged and how intrapersonal dynamics play out. In other words, people's personality is a factor. Someone's communication style and how they interact with a neighbor, however, is inextricably linked to conceptualizations about race, class, and belonging. In a way, Elizabeth's comment fits within the neoliberal diversity rhetoric espoused in official planning literature. Hierarchies of difference are downplayed and the

systemic marginalization that orders Columbia Heights is transformed into a conflict between friendly people and rude people. But there is something valuable in exploring respondents' focus on personality and neighborliness. Fostering good relationships opens up spaces of contact in which residents come together, learn things about each other (including their roles in gentrification,) and help one another out.

Short of dismantling the neoliberal development model, can we learn something from how these changing neighborhoods function on the street level? Are there interventions to be made that would contribute to an erosion of inequitable development? While the facts remain- people have assets, people push people out, people get amenities while others do not- how these disparately powerful people get along with one another may offer productive moments of 1) acknowledging inequitable development in a way that the planning rhetoric has continually failed to do and 2) putting faces and personalities onto the people who are being abstractly shoved to the side.¹³⁸

Respondents in the 19th street group were all fond of their neighborhood within a neighborhood, primarily because of everyone's willingness to talk with one another and help one another out. Valerie sums up the feel of this block:

Yeah, it's a nice little quiet street and people are very neighborly. We have a gentleman across the street over there he's like the mayor of the street. People will allow him to have the door key to their homes in case they're out traveling. He'll come put their mail in their house and check everything out.... Here, everyone's cool. Everyone's cool. They came here and they blended in. And of course when I say "they," Caucasians not with so much of an attitude or, "I have a house and this is mine and I can run this street!" It's not like that. They came here asking questions: "what's the neighborhood like?" We all get along very well. We mix with each other. We kick it. If you notice the guy went over there. They're going to watch the game tonight. They're going over there to watch the game. There's a Hispanic guy and there's a brother that lives right there. And the people living in that house there of different races, creeds, and colors. And they're just going to chill and watch the game.

Eric qualifies this sentiment in a later conversation, telling me that everyone gets along on that particular block. Elizabeth also posited that the closeness of the 19th street group may be because of the closed-off nature of the block. This portion of the street is cut off on the north and south ends of the block. Though there is an intersection before the end of the block on the north side that offers access to larger Columbia Heights, they are still far more insular physically than most of the blocks in the neighborhood. Elizabeth thinks, “it’s almost like we’re forced to be together because of the way this is structured.... We probably enjoyed the snowstorm [that shut D.C. down for a full week] the most of any block in D.C. We didn’t see a plow for the whole time and everybody was out so it was a lot of fun.”

For Valerie, Eric, Elizabeth and others, the keys to a good neighborhood are support and camaraderie. This might sound like a simple sentiment, but it is meaningful in the context of the war of territory in which Columbia Heights is embroiled. My respondents feel these characteristics are lacking in the mentality of incoming residents. Even my own conversations with newcomers for the following chapter similarly suggest that newcomers are far less engaged with their neighbors. The contact among differently privileged groups has created a greater level of understanding and empathy for the concerns longtime residents have as the neighborhood gentrifies. For the white respondents who came in the 1990s, these relationships have required engagement with the sticky power dynamics involved in the space they share. Contrasted to an official rhetoric that encourages harmony vis a vis historical amnesia, these respondents’ everyday, often explicit negotiation of difference and power can be viewed as a counter-discursive act working against the neoliberal narrative.

The built environment that has fostered such a sense of community potentially limits the transferability of this case study to other areas of the neighborhood. Another limit to the potential of these close-knit networks is that, as Benedict Anderson argues, imagined communities are often built on exclusion.¹³⁹ Is this relative harmony only sustainable because they have created an exclusionary block within the larger Columbia Heights? They figure the neighborhood to be a model of mutual respect away from the cold stares of incoming gentrifiers, but is that harmony also defined against Columbia Heights's low-income residents? As Valerie revealed in an earlier comment, talking to people within your class bracket and/or with your ideas of polite conversation "makes for a better day." Furthermore, should politeness be a prerequisite for a sense of belonging? Finally, does being a good neighbor absolve newcomers' economic complicity in inequitable development?

These are all questions that I cannot answer. I do not argue that being a good neighborhood is the answer to systemic oppression, nor am I implying that neighborliness transcends hierarchies of difference. I do believe, though, that these interactions offer something beyond the empty rhetoric of diversity in planning documents. They have the potential to highlight and work against inequality. They have the potential to offer a parallel small-scale intervention alongside the larger intervention that needs to be made to hold city officials and developers accountable for equitable development. These suggestive concluding remarks can exist with the critique of planning rhetoric and its engagement with difference throughout Washington D.C.'s 20th century history. Both lines of inquiry are vital to understanding the complex relationship between individual residents and larger systems.

In this chapter I have illustrated how social justice rhetoric has long been a part of planning. Rhetoric has changed over time from erasure, to empty visuals to quell dissent post-riots, to neoliberal affirmative action, to neoliberal claims for diversity without acknowledgement that upscale development threatens that diversity. My overarching critique is that, despite progress in including the needs, concerns, and voices of marginalized residents, the rhetoric has been largely used to support continued disinvestment and neglect. Ethnographic inquiry is a key component to this textual critique because it tells the story behind the rhetoric. But ethnography does more than reveal the harsher and more complicated reality of how Columbia Heights has been experienced in the last fifty years. Ethnography highlights how difference operates on the ground and opens up productive possibilities. Through the stories and reflections of residents, ethnography reveals the potential to parlay that contact into anti-racist, anti-classist resistance to inequitable development. These potential interventions must exist *in addition* to a large-scale critique of the government and private developers.

It is vital to maintain hope that we (i.e. residents, activists, scholars, etc.) can transform uneven development. We also have to recognize that we are firmly entrenched in neoliberalism and progress is going to be incremental and slow going. This chapter illustrates that contact between groups can sometimes fight the hegemony of neoliberalism. It shows that people on the ground in this still-diverse neighborhood know the score. That offers potential for mobilization against larger systemic players like the city and development firms, but it also speaks to the fact that many of the residents in Columbia Heights have already mobilized: on stoops, on porches, at community meetings, and in the streets.

Notes

¹ American Institute of Architects, *Of Plans and People*, 1950 (Washington, D.C.: AIA, 1950).

² American Association of Architects, *Of Plans and People*, 22-23.

³ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 27.

⁴ American Association of Architects, *Of Plans and People*, 25. Not surprisingly, the American Institute of Architects would later be a vocal opponent of public housing, calling it a “very questionable asset.” Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 162.

⁵ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Greenwood, 1981), 8.

⁶ Redevelopment Land Agency, *Annual Report*, 1968 (Washington D.C.: D.C. Office of Planning, 1968).

⁷ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1970 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1970).

⁸ Ben Gilbert, *Ten Blocks from the White House*, 41.

⁹ Steven Gregory, *Black Corona*, 140.

¹⁰ Christine M. Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City: The Myth of American City Planning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, 1992); David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Boston: Blackwell, 1997).

¹¹ Though it is not a primary topic in this chapter, the use of queer sexuality in selling Columbia Heights is discussed in chapter four.

¹² Two such examples are the legal and medical discourse that defined madness and sexuality. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Vintage, 1988); *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage, 1990).

¹³ I was unable to secure any respondents receiving public assistance/housing, thus skewing the class diversity of my sample. My respondents were working, middle and upper-middle-class residents, but the absence of an integral demographic of Columbia Heights should be noted. As I discuss later in the chapter, my social location and position in the neighborhood mediated the respondents and information I could access.

¹⁴ National Capital Planning Commission, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000*, 1961 (Washington, DC: NCPC, 1961).

¹⁵ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1955 (Washington, DC: DCOP, 1955), 14.

¹⁶ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1953 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1953), 5.

¹⁷ James W. Rouse and Nathaniel S. Keith, *No Slums in Ten Years* (Washington, D.C.: 1955).

¹⁸ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1962), 4-5.

¹⁹ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1962, 10.

²⁰ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 44.

²¹ Steven Gregory, *Black Corona*.

²² RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1954), 6.

²³ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1954, 14-15.

²⁴ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1960 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1960), 12-13.

²⁵ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1960, 19.

²⁶ The story has that message and the people interviewed for the story perpetuate that message, but that does not necessarily mean that residents who benefitted from these programs bought into these ideas. The strategic acceptance of well-needed aid does not preclude residents from resisting the pathology this ideology bestowed on them.

²⁷ Because of the organized and ideological nature of the events in April, 1968 I refer to them as civil uprisings. Though the title of “riot” has often been used as a descriptor rather than a pejorative, calling the events a riot reinforces the erroneous idea that they were unorganized, apolitical, and wrong-headed. Regardless of the effectiveness of the uprisings as a social justice strategy, it is vital to understand them as such. Though some documents, such as the mayor’s office’s *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, refer to the events as “civil disturbances,” this moniker still uses a pejorative that invokes chaos rather than activism. Walter E. Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Mayor, 1978), 1.

²⁸ Walter E. Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, front cover.

²⁹ That the images of disorder involves men and the images of order involve women adds a gendered dimension to the symbolism as well. Here women are the great civilizers, but the “tomorrow” image also illustrates that the streets are now safe for women. Without delving too far into a close reading of a child’s drawing, it is worth noting that the report uses images that reinforce the inherent violence of black men and the need for women to be patronizingly protected.

³⁰ Walter E. Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, 1.

³¹ As Arnold Hirsch argues, “The burning and looting of primarily white owned property in massive black ghettos was the most visible manifestation of racial tension permitted in the modern city.” Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

³² Ben Gilbert, *Ten Blocks from the White House*, 149.

³³ Ibid., 179.

³⁴ Washington, *Ten Years Since April 4, 1968*, 5.

³⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

³⁶ I use the term “riots” to reflect the terminology used by my respondents.

³⁷ Model Inner City Community Organization, *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?* 1968 (Washington, D.C.: MICCO, 1968), 4.

³⁸ Model Inner City Community Organization, *What Kind of Neighborhood Do You Want?*, 8.

³⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁰ Robert Self discusses the almost meteoric rise of black political power in center cities. Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003).

⁴¹ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1969), 14.

⁴² RLA, *Annual Report*, 1969, 38.

⁴³ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1971 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1971).

⁴⁴ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1960, 24.

⁴⁵ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1972 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1972), 11.

⁴⁶ Government of the District of Columbia, *Workable Program For Community Improvement*, 1971 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP), 13.

⁴⁷ Washington, *Ten Years Since*, 29.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁹ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1967), front cover.

⁵⁰ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1967.

⁵¹ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1970.

⁵² RLA, *Annual Report*, 1971.

⁵³ Public housing residents and councilmember Frank Smith started a controversial urban garden in an abandoned RLA lot at 14th and Belmont Streets, Northwest in the early 1980s. City officials decried the garden when they wanted to develop the land, but the residents started the garden precisely because the lot had gone undeveloped for so long. Their successful garden had widespread neighborhood appeal and got rid of the RLA's empty "eyesore." Even local "junkies asked me if they could get a plot," one gardener told *Washington Post* reporters. The community garden was explicitly meant to, in the words of Frank Smith, "reclaim the neighborhood, to show that the good people who live up there have not left." Michel Marriot, "NW Garden Controversy is Growing: Urban Plots Called Oasis, Waste of Land," *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1985, 47. A well tended garden near the Tivoli theater at 14th Street and Park Street NW existed on an RLA lot. Dana Hull, "Amid the Turmoil, Columbia Heights Struggles to Revive," *The Washington Post*, Aug. 24, 1996, E01.

⁵⁴ Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Final Environment Statement for the First, Second, and Third Action Years of the District of Columbia Neighborhood Development Program Fourteenth Street Urban Renewal Area* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1973), 7.

⁵⁵ MWPHA was sustained partially on private charitable donation through the United Givers Fund, but was also supported by the federal government. Patricia Camp, "19 District Community Groups Get \$1 Million in Federal Grants," *The Washington Post*, March 9, 1978, DC2.

⁵⁶ Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Final Environment Statement for the First, Second, and Third Action Years of the District of Columbia Neighborhood Development Program Fourteenth Street Urban Renewal Area*, MWPHA-2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, MWPHA-2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, MWPHA-4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, MWPHA-4.

⁶⁰ Charles Connerly, "Federal Urban Policy and the Birth of Democratic Planning in Birmingham, Alabama, 1949-1974," in *Planning the Twentieth-Century American City*, edited by Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 339.

⁶¹ Charles Connerly, "Federal Urban Policy and the Birth of Democratic Planning in Birmingham, Alabama, 1949-1974," 353.

⁶² Ibid., 353, 356.

⁶³ National Capital Planning Commission, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000*, 29.

⁶⁴ Harold Goldblatt, *Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal in Washington, D.C.*, 1966 (Washington, D.C.: Health and Welfare Council of the National Capital Area, 1966).

⁶⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁶ James W. Rouse and Nathaniel S. Keith, *No Slums in Ten Years*, 11.

⁶⁷ Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Final Environment Statement for the First, Second, and Third Action Years of the District of Columbia Neighborhood Development Program Fourteenth Street Urban Renewal Area*, vii-5.

⁶⁸ Ibid., ii-49.

⁶⁹ Though public housing does exist in the neighborhood, there is also not nearly enough affordable housing to satisfy the demand. This problem is deprioritized as available housing stock and land is used to build majority market-rate housing. Similarly, job opportunities have come to the neighborhood, they are just a) over thirty years after the report was published and b) retail and service-sector jobs that do not provide a living wage.

⁷⁰ Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 187.

⁷¹ Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: District Elements*, 2006 (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Office of Documents, 2007), 20-15.

⁷² D.C. Office of Planning, *Neighborhood Investment Fund: Columbia Heights Target Investment Plan*, 2008 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 2008), 21.

⁷³ D.C. Office of Planning, *Neighborhood Investment Fund: Columbia Heights Target Investment Plan*, 24.

⁷⁴ D.C. Office of Planning *Implementing Transit Oriented Development*, 2001 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, 2001), 46.

⁷⁵ D.C. Office of Planning *Implementing Transit Oriented Development*, 46.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁷ Rhee's terminations were guided by a new evaluation standard based on students' standardized test scores, a provision echoing No Child Left Behind guidelines. Bill Turque, "Rhee Dismisses 241 Teachers in the District; Union Vows Challenge, Firings Are Result of New Evaluations," *The Washington Post*, July 24, 2010, A1.

⁷⁸ Robert McCartney, “Adrian Fenty, Vincent Gray and the Politics of Race and Class in D.C.,” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 29, 2010, B1.

⁷⁹ As discussed later in this chapter, class is the primary dividing line in the debate about schools, but race plays an important role. Namely, some black middle-class residents’ felt conflicted about not putting their child in public schools because of their commitment to anti-racism. Some respondents also argued white newcomers would lead to improved schools, a claim I dispute. Either way, race and class are inextricable. Assumptions about whiteness are tied up with class and class issues being tied up assumptions about how one should act depending on a particular racial identification.

⁸⁰ Robert Self argues that this rise- over 300 black mayors elected between 1973 and 1986- reflects a political commitment to social justice among urban residents despite increasing disinvestment and depopulation. Robert Self, *American Babylon*, 314.

⁸¹ Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 192.

⁸² RLA, *Report 1979-1985*, 1986 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1986), 14.

⁸³ Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 195.

⁸⁴ William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 15.

⁸⁵ Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 197.

⁸⁶ RLA, *Report 1979-1985*, 1986.

⁸⁷ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1982 (Washington, D.C.: OP, 1982), 30.

⁸⁸ RLA, *Annual Report*, 1983 (Washington, D.C.: OP, 1983).

⁸⁹ The only real exception to this map of uneven investment is the Frank Reeves municipal building in the U Street Corridor, a massive office building built by Barry to help revitalize the U street area. In the 1980s, though, U Street- while considered dangerous and disinvested- was not as stigmatized as Columbia Heights. Its Metro station opened much sooner and it also had a much more storied history as an intellectual and entertainment destination.

⁹⁰ This report was created by Washington, D.C. Economic Partnership, a private-public partnership designed to promote investment. Washington, D.C. Economic Partnership, *2008 Neighborhood Profiles: Columbia Heights*, 2008 (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Economic Partnership, 2008), 1.

⁹¹ RLA, *1979-1985 Report*, 5.

⁹² Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 190.

⁹³ Nikita Stewart and Jonathan Mummolo, "D.C. Council Votes to Censure Barry: Former Mayor Is Also Stripped of Committee Chairmanship," *The Washington Post* Mar. 3, 2010, A1.

⁹⁴ *Washington City Paper*, July 9, 2009, cover page.

⁹⁵ As I discuss in chapter four, these racially and class charged debates about Barry have played a large role in the discussion of his opposition of same sex marriage, a move he sees as in line with disenfranchised black residents.

⁹⁶ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America* (New York: Norton, 1992).

⁹⁷ Margaret Crawford, "The Current Stat of Everyday Urbanism," in *Everyday Urbanism*, edited by John Case, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008), 1-18.

⁹⁸ Alex F. Schwartz, *Housing Policy in the United States: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 263.

⁹⁹ Stephen Steinberg and Alice O'Connor have argued that there is little proof to support models for understanding poverty that a) rely on the idea that "cultures of poverty" normalize poverty, crime, and pathology thus perpetuating people's poverty and b) argue poverty and crime are reinforced through spatial concentration in particular neighborhoods and public housing projects. Stephen Steinberg charts the history of this ideology, illustrating how the positivist veil of social science was bestowed on the ideology to validate its racist and classist assumptions. Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 106-127. Similarly, Alice O'Connor illustrates how "culture of poverty" arguments were tools to justify discrimination and disinvestment rather than a sound explanation of how culture among low-income people circulated. Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 99-123. Culture of poverty arguments were also influenced by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling's theory that, to curb urban crime, law enforcement had make sure neighborhoods were kept orderly and clean. The theory relies on assumptions that low-income people are prone to pathological behavior and do not respect their surroundings This impulse to control and police whole communities of low-income people rather than those that commit crime is reflected in later mixed-income development plans that advocated the de-concentration of poor people to keep their pathology at bay, under the watchful eye of middle-income residents. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows: Police and Neighborhood Safety," *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982, 29-38.

¹⁰⁰ Dennis Gale, *Washington D.C.: The Inner City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 106.

¹⁰¹ Washington D.C. Economic Partnership, *2008 Neighborhood Profiles: Columbia Heights*, 1.

¹⁰² Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 325.

¹⁰³ District of Columbia Office of Planning, *The Comprehensive Plan For the National Capital*, 2006 (Washington, D.C.: D.C. Office of Documents, 2007), 1-1.

¹⁰⁴ D.C. Office of Planning, *The Comprehensive Plan For the National Capital*, 5-16.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-5.

¹⁰⁷ Lance Freeman notes a similar acknowledgement in his study of gentrification in New York: “though appreciative of neighborhood improvements associated with gentrification, many see this as evidence that such amenities and services are only provided when whites move into their neighborhood.” Lance Freeman, *There Goes the Hood*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Though throughout this dissertation I use “Latina/o” as a designation for residents of Mexican, and Central, Latin and/or South American descent, Hector self-identifies as Hispanic.

¹⁰⁹ This data is based on 311 call statistics. The percentage increase represents requests that were resolved, but the data is not ironclad proof. The statistic also reflects an increased knowledge about the 311 service that centralized requests for resident requests. Furthermore, it could reflect that more people called for services. To be more useful in proving Hector’s assumptions, data would have to reveal how responsiveness to calls changed over time, comparing the number of resolved requests to the number of total requests over time. This data was not readily available and ultimately falls outside the scope of this dissertation. More research would be useful in juxtaposing residents’ intuition and lived experience with statistics. For this project, however, my focus is on what residents’ experience can reveal about the development process. Statistics taken from Neighborhood Cluster 2 (see Appendix for map) figures, an area that includes Columbia Heights and a few adjoining neighborhoods. Columbia Heights-specific data is not available. Urban Institute and Washington, D.C. Local Support Coalition, *Neighborhood Cluster 2*, http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/nclusters/nbr_prof_clus2.html (accessed 3/1/11). Service call information from Washington, D.C. Citywide Data Warehouse, *311 Service Requests*, <http://data.octo.dc.gov/> (accessed 2/28/11).

¹¹⁰ Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C., *Annual Report*, 1999 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Mayor, 1999), 31.

¹¹¹ These averages were taken from demographic information from eight public schools in Columbia Heights: four charter and four traditional. The demographics of each school were self reported to Public School Review, LLC, D.C., *Washington Public Schools*, www.publicschoolreview.com (accessed 2/24/10). These averages are in line with citywide statistics for all public schools, with the exception of the number of Hispanic students. Because Columbia Heights is home to a large Latina/o community, there was a larger percentage of Hispanic students. In 2008-2009 Washington D.C. Public Schools reported that, citywide, students were 79% black, 12% Hispanic, 7% white, and 2% Asian, with 66% qualifying for free lunch. D.C. Public Schools, *Facts and Statistics*, <http://www.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Who+We+Are/Facts+and+Statistics> (accessed 2/28/11).

¹¹² In some ways charter school represent the hallmarks of neoliberalism. They are corporate entities that receive city funding. The rationale is that, because they are not bound by traditional requirements of the traditional public schools (i.e. less strict teacher certification requirements and loosened curriculum restrictions,) they are free to use innovative strategies to improve students' test scores. Though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, scholars such as William Sedlacek argue that standardized testing not only limits a holistic assessment of learning, but unfairly favors white, middle-class students. William E. Sedlacek, *Beyond the Big Test: Noncognitive Assessment in Higher Education* (Indianapolis: Wiley, 2004). Charter schools represent a public investment in the idea that capitalism is the best model for social betterment. This dubious ideological shift is coupled with an economic structure that funnels public money into privately run schools, essentially siphoning money from public schools to increasingly competitive charter schools. Charter schools have gained increased prestige potentially because of their disassociation with failed public schools. This embrace of charter schools is often supported with a concomitant critique of teacher's unions. That fact plus the fact that large corporations such as Walmart are supporting the charter movement illustrate why this movement is partially guided by neoliberal values that privilege private enterprise over social welfare. For a critique of this logic see Dana Goldstein, "Grading *Waiting for Superman*," *The Nation*, Oct. 11, 2010, <http://www.thenation.com/article/154986/grading-waiting-superman> (accessed 2/24/11).

¹¹³ Figures self reported to Private School Review, LLC, D.C., *Washington Private Schools*, www.privateschoolreview.com (accessed 2/24/11).

¹¹⁴ Dennis Gale places argues that redevelopment in disinvested areas will not be wholly successful until white residents begin sending their children to local schools. Gale relies too heavily on the idea that white inclusion is the only way to achieve neighborhood stability rather than conceptualizing ways for blacks to receive resources from the state regardless of where white people move. Gale discusses the racism that factors into the decision not to send children to public school, but his solutions demure to white intervention. His study of Washington, D.C. in the 1970s and 1980s reveals a similar lag in the gentrification of Washington, D.C. and the racial and class makeup of public

schools. Dennis Gale, *Washington D.C.: The Inner City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization*, 168.

¹¹⁵ Schrag, *The Great Society Subway*, 106.

¹¹⁶ Washington D.C. Economic Partnership, *2008 Neighborhood Profiles: Columbia Heights*, 1.

¹¹⁷ For the changing rhetoric of race in discriminatory suburban housing see David Freund's study of suburban housing policy in suburban Detroit. David Freund, *Colored Property*. As Dennis Gale has charted, the influx of middle and upper-middle-class residents into Washington D.C. has led to a massive out-migration of working and middle-class black Washingtonians. While this does represent an unprecedented opportunity for urban black to move to the suburbs, they are faced with pressure to leave quickly and for less of a payoff. Additionally, surrounding suburban counties such as Prince George's County have lagged in providing quality city/county services for this rising ex-urban population. Dennis Gale, *Washington DC: The Inner City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization*. Richard Harris, in his discussion of unplanned suburbs in Toronto, argues that low quality infrastructure was often a trade-off for affordable housing. Because it was more cost-effective, residents settled suburbs before developing infrastructure. Although Prince George's county does not have the same infrastructural issues as early 20th century Toronto, Harris's study illuminates the tradeoff between affordable suburban housing and infrastructure. If city services in Prince George's County improved, it would most likely come with a hefty price tag: something that threatens working-class residents' ability to afford living in the area. Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs, Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900 to 1950* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 270.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of popular representations of race and suburbia see Lynn Spiegel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁹ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 17.

¹²⁰ Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*, 163.

¹²¹ Slater questions the validity of Freeman's methods in Freeman's study of gentrification in New York. Slater argues that displacement studies need to account for all the people who are displaced but who are not counted on things like community surveys. Tom Slater, "The Eviction From Critical Perspectives in Gentrification Research," 582.

¹²² Ruth Bergman, "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood Goes Upscale: Redevelopment as Neighborhood Cleansing," 334.

¹²³ Dennis Downey, "From Americanization to Multiculturalism: Political Symbols and Struggles for Cultural Diversity in Twentieth Century American Race Relations," 262.

¹²⁴ Washington, D.C. Office of Planning, *The Comprehensive For the National Capital*, Inside Cover.

¹²⁵ Washington, D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework*, 2004 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 2004), ES.2.

¹²⁶ Washington D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Metro Station Area Community-Based Plan*, 1997 (Washington, D.C.: DCOP, 1997), 6, 10.

¹²⁷ Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Inequality*; Jiannbin Lee Shiao, *Identifying Talent, Institutionalizing Diversity*; Sara Ahmed, "The Nonperformativity of Antiracism."

¹²⁸ D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework*, ES.1.

¹²⁹ Ibid., A.2.

¹³⁰ Ibid., A.3.

¹³¹ The role of cultural tourism, while linked to rhetoric of diversity, is outside the scope of this dissertation. In chapter three, however, I do examine how the appropriation of black history has functioned in the gentrification of the neighborhood.

¹³² Washington, D.C. Office of Planning, *The Comprehensive Plan For the National Capital*, 2006, 20-24.

¹³³ Washington, D.C. Office of Planning, *Columbia Heights Public Realm Framework*, ES1.1.

¹³⁴ Ibid., A.2.

¹³⁵ For a discussion of how racism manifests in a cultural moment deemed beyond racism, see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 2.

¹³⁶ In fact, Valerie sensed I was gay, and hesitantly asked me at the end of our first interview. She was very supportive and suggested she set me up with some of her single gay friends, an offer I politely declined.

¹³⁷ See Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block*. Lance Freeman, *There Goes the 'Hood*.

¹³⁸ The second potential is, however, a double-edged sword. The flipside to white newcomers humanizing longtime residents of color is that white gentrifiers can be similarly humanized, obscuring their role in the gentrification process.

¹³⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006 (1983)).

CHAPTER THREE VIGNETTE

I try to think back to the months leading up to my decision to move to this neighborhood. I had still not picked a research topic and was new to urban studies and- to a lesser extent- urban areas in general. I chose Columbia Heights because I knew fun people that lived there and had space in their apartment. I thought it would be cool. When I unpack the coolness, the specific things that come to mind are the ability to not have a car; the ability to follow in the footsteps of so many other intellectuals and creative people who had thrived in cities rather than floundered among the bourgeois violence of the suburbs. But there was more to this coolness. Without the words to articulate this, I was moving to Columbia Heights because I didn't feel prohibitively unsafe but it still had residents of different races, ethnicities, sexualities, and incomes. It was not yet an outpost for yuppies (I did not realize that the first waves of gentrification had been going on for decades.) I was sharing space with people of color at varying degrees of income. In short, I partially moved here because of the diversity.

But why? Why was diversity important to me? As someone who is concerned with equality, I wanted to be in a space less associated with institutions of racism. I wanted to be around people who were less likely to be steeped in privilege. Was this proximity a statement that I was committed to a more equal and coalitional world? Perhaps, but it was in no way a substitute of actually *doing* something about it.

Soon after arriving, I began to see the war of territory being fought in Columbia Heights. Soon I began to see that all spaces are racial and class war zones. I felt the need to disassociate with other white people in my neighborhood. I assumed that they were not as informed as me; not as conflicted in their choice to live in a neighborhood on (if not

past) the brink of gentrification. When I am on the subway and I see a young white person in vintage clothes or plastic rimmed glasses I pray that they do not get off with me at the Columbia Heights stop. Nine times out of ten they do. Things are changing and I feel as though I'm on the wrong side of the change.

As I began to interview newcomers, I began to understand the potential and limits of acknowledging uneven development. It tells a story not often told in glossy ads and brunch menus. Yet, there are moments of complicity in my day to day life. I present the anatomy of this complicity not to purge my guilt or wallow in shame, but to illustrate the ubiquity of this ideology in the life of a white middle-class newcomer. I present it to show just how hard it is to resist and how easy it is to stay quietly privileged.

I have sat through cocktail party conversations about adorable neighborhoods and their charming bodegas and friendly crackheads. Young white people collect these neighborhood flourishes like new messenger bags or apartment amenities. I do not usually challenge their stories with a lens critical of racism and classism. It's been a long day and we are just enjoying a nice evening. We are enjoying a nice evening at an establishment that used to be the oldest black gay bar in the country and now it is a hipster bar that is- tonight- exclusively white.

Systems of inequality are so entrenched in this neoliberal moment that one of the most powerful things that reinforces them is silence. It is following the path of least resistance and not speaking up. Racism is manners. I worry in these moments about the politics of complicity. For the last three years I have been steeped in reminders of the uneven development in Columbia Heights. I believe that anytime the dominant image of Columbia Heights as a neighborhood that is "up and coming" is challenged the power of

that ideology is destabilized. And yet, sometimes, when I have put the dissertation down for the evening, I quietly float to a neighborhood bar charging \$15 for cocktails and drink them without repulsion. Activists and scholars need a night off, but what does it mean to take a night off among the spaces you critique?

I fall into the comfortably insidious language of likeness, barely masking these comments' reflection of racial and class hierarchy. "It's not really my crowd." If I'm feeling particularly emboldened, I temper implication with seemingly progressive cheekiness: "that bar is for white people." The boundaries are reinforced in my day to day life in ways that I cannot control and ways that I can.

I cannot control the clientele of neighborhood establishments. But I can control what kind of information is tacked on to the glowing reviews of crown jewels in the new Columbia Heights. Every time someone mentions Wonderland, I can tell them that it used to be the oldest gay bar in the city and the first gay bar to cater to African Americans. I can re-inscribe a history that my transient friends and I are encouraged to patronize on two-dimensional plaques. When people express excitement about an incoming Chipotle, I can mention the dozens of well-established Latino restaurants in the area. In both cases, these comments could backfire and become part of the language of "authenticity" so integral to selling the multicultural neighborhood. There is a quicksand of cooptation. In the current landscape it seems everything is either a commodity or a liability. But despite how my intent is warped, I think it is important to try to keep what's really going on in Columbia Heights at the forefront. This was not a blank slate. I have only been here for five years and I know that.

Despite these moments of push back, there continue to be moments of complicity. When people moving to Columbia Heights ask me for advice, I tell them what areas are mostly white now and what are established African American or Latina/o blocks. I say this out of respect for the communities that have formed there, wanting to temper the full-scale takeover from incoming, white middle-class residents. However, in doing so I reinscribe the ways race, ethnicity, and class organize the neighborhood. I follow the divides of the neighborhood, the redlines that show which business should be patronized by whom in this supposedly all-inclusive neighborhood. But of course segregation still looks like diversity when you look at the street.

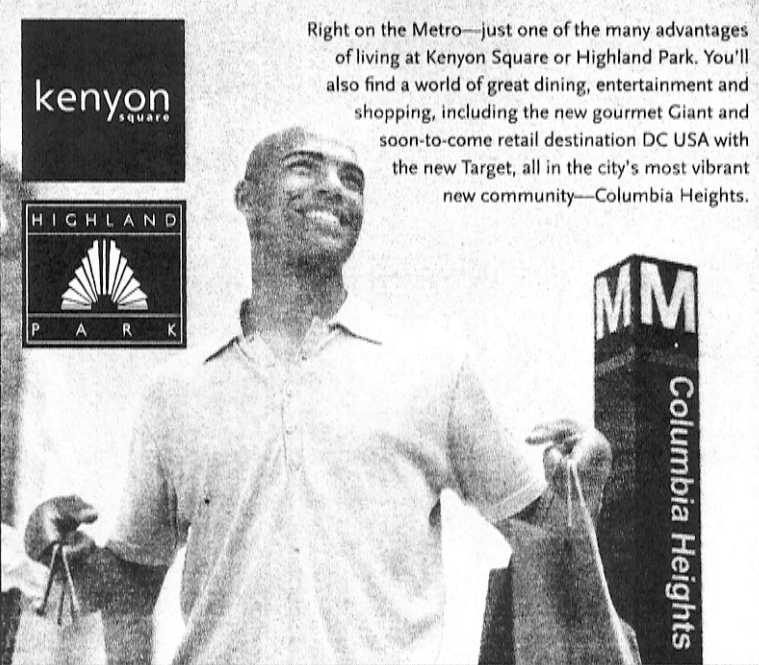
CHAPTER THREE

FACE-LIFTING IN COLUMBIA HEIGHTS: NEWCOMERS, REAL ESTATE MARKETING, AND THE APPROPRIATION OF DIVERSITY

A young black man in a crisp polo shirt smiles off into the distance, presumably at the “world of great dining, entertainment and shopping” before him (Figure 47).¹ He proudly holds up a mass of department store-style shopping bags. Behind him, the distinctive Metro subway station sign lets us know that the “city’s most vibrant new community” is Columbia Heights. The bold text in this advertisement for the new Kenyon Square and Highland Park luxury condominium complexes exalts: “Metro At Your Door. Your Neighborhood, Your World.” But who is the “your” in question? Who belongs in this new Columbia Heights?

This chapter focuses on who is being sold Columbia Heights and how. My primary focus is on how markers of difference, specifically race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class, are mined from the context of everyday (often contentious) interactions between residents in order to be reformed in a neoliberal discourse designed to sell the neighborhood as a post-inequality landscape. I argue that the branding of Columbia Heights reveals the logic of neoliberal development. Rather than erasing diversity in service of upscale development, this development requires engagement with and celebration of multicultural urban experience. The kinds of diversity conceptualized and valued, though, are often removed from attendant issues of power. In this chapter I first chart the use of multicultural aesthetics in real estate advertising. I then turn to newcomers’ responses about diversity to illustrate how “diversity” is celebrated, but often

tied to negative ideas about cleanliness, crime, and agency. Turning back to advertisements, I chart the discursive production of a “new” Columbia Heights that aims



Right on the Metro—just one of the many advantages of living at Kenyon Square or Highland Park. You'll also find a world of great dining, entertainment and shopping, including the new gourmet Giant and soon-to-come retail destination DC USA with the new Target, all in the city's most vibrant new community—Columbia Heights.

METRO AT YOUR DOOR
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR WORLD

Now selling!

- Atop Columbia Heights Metro
- From the upper \$200s
- 1BRs to 2BRs w/ den
- Volume Lofts w/ nearly 20' ceilings
- First-floor retail, across from DC USA and the city's first Target
- Underground parking available
- Luxury finishes with balconies and terraces
- Two-level fitness center
- Rooftop terrace and party room
- Panoramic city views

877.596.1265
 kenyonsquare.com
 highlandparkdc.com

OPEN HOUSE
 at The Ellington:
 Daily 11 am – 5 pm
 Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm
 1301 U St, NW
 Suite 618

Sales by **DOMUS** realty


BROKER CO-OP 3% 

Figure 47. *Washington City Paper*, Sept. 15, 2006, p39.

to erase longtime residents of color and reform history as a salable commodity. Finally, I return to my respondents' reflections to examine how ideas of "new" and "old" Columbia Heights are reinforced, in addition to exploring possibilities to bridge the divide exacerbated by this ordering process.

I focus on the marketing campaigns of four highly publicized "luxury" condo and apartment developments that opened in the mid-2000s: Highland Park, Park Triangle, Kenyon Square, and the Fedora. Using advertisements gleaned from random sampling of three major D.C. newspapers from 1999 to 2009, I argue that much of the recent visual real estate marketing in Columbia Heights has relied on images of classed, multicultural bodies and the construction of a vibrant, multicultural Columbia Heights ready to be consumed: an invitation to eat the Other in the lap of luxury. Targeting white residents using flattened and commodified difference is part of the project, but the ads also leave room for desire production among middle and upper-middle-class people of color. The more residents of color that fit the upscale mold of the advertisements in Columbia Heights, the more the narrative of the new Columbia Heights is reinforced. Though this buy-in is inclusive to whoever can afford the mortgage, the inclusion it promotes is limited.

This multicultural aesthetic obscures rising property taxes, displacement, shrinking affordable housing stock, and ideological tension between incoming and longtime residents. Furthermore, the advertorial construction of this "new" Columbia Heights not only elides a vibrant history of activism and advocacy among local working-

class residents of color, it completely erases history that does not fit the limited narrative of Columbia Heights that gleans the most revenue.

To supplement the discursive site of advertising, this chapter also includes ethnography conducted with incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents of Columbia Heights to explore how they conceptualize the neighborhood. As Michel de Certeau has argued, the most powerful enactments of spatial politics come from the everyday appropriation of the city by its inhabitants.² The ideology of these advertisements enters a street-level cacophony of multiple perceptions of space that leads to talking, ignoring, walking together, crossing the street, glancing sideways and avoiding glances. This everyday battle complicates, affirms and opposes the discourse of advertisements.

From these conversations, I conclude that diversity as a concept and a demographic reality is simultaneously valued and maligned. In both real estate marketing and in newcomers' everyday lives, diversity is operationalized in a dizzying number of ways: as a commodity used to sell a neighborhood, as a flattened symbol distorting and insufficiently redressing the disinvestment of Columbia Heights's residents of color, as a source of liveliness, as a source of crime and wariness, and as a vital component to social justice. Above all, the discourse of diversity actively shapes the material environment, influencing literal and emotional investment in the neighborhood.

Throughout this chapter, I unpack what work diversity rhetoric does. I critique the work of neoliberal "diversity politics," what Jane Ward calls "an ideological project oriented toward normalizing and containing difference."³ I also discuss how the embrace of demographic diversity is not an inherently problematic goal. The difference is that a

true investment in demographic diversity values those that make up that diversity and provides them with equal resources.

Typically diversity ideology under neoliberalism, as argued by Lisa Duggan and others, involves celebrating racial, ethnic, and other difference. It is a way to keep whiteness and wealth at the center, adding a superficial celebration of difference to obscure continued oppression.⁴ Because Columbia Heights has long been majority black and Latina/o, the ideology that keeps whiteness and wealth at the center is not immediately accessible. Though they still maintain power generally, incoming white residents cannot immediately control the racialized and classed Others that populate the space. Incoming middle and upper-middle-class whites are in the minority and cannot easily use residents of color as commodifiable, urban flourishes.

For incoming residents to gain footing, discourse surrounding development must cover or distort the history of the neighborhood and the agency of its residents. Typically, this is done by either representing the city as derelict and/or empty or by packaging the history of the neighborhood into narratives that can be used to upscale the neighborhood.⁵ Then “diversity” as a concept must itself be refigured. Traditionally diversity has been shorthand for the selective inclusion of difference in the white mainstream. Because of the racial/ethnic makeup of the city, diversity in Columbia Heights means more white people and more middle and upper-middle-class residents.

Diversity- as an ideology that is inscribed with prestige and value under neoliberalism- is deployed to justify the inclusion of white middle-class people. A high concentration of people of color is only valuable if they are activated and circulated as supplements to white middle and upper-middle-class life. Only after the racial and

economic balance has shifted in the neighborhood, can the traditional script of selective multicultural inclusion be followed.

Representing the Difference

All discourse creates meaning through particular representations. Meaning is made through not only the selective presentation of information, but the absence of certain information as well. Advertisements are texts that overtly and somewhat translucently present a distorted representation to sell products. The marketing of space is therefore a discursive site that does more than narrate the qualities of a particular building or neighborhood. From the small ads placed by landlords and tenants in newspapers and on web sites to the well-funded marketing campaigns of sales and development firms, real estate advertisements tell a complex and often conflicting story about a particular space. It is another site that works to define Columbia Heights and, in this case, this symbolic ordering is done to quite literally sell Columbia Heights. This chapter focuses on a selection of these advertisements to suggest who is being sold Columbia Heights and to explore how that symbolic ordering affects the material neighborhood.

The cultural work of advertisements is unique in that most people understand that the texts are skewed in order to sell something. They show hyper-beautiful, thin, well-dressed people having a perpetual good time. Most viewers understand that this is a highly skewed version of the world or, in this case, Columbia Heights. Even with this knowledge, the idealized bodies and spaces sold in these advertisements shape the desire and perceptions of the viewer. As Roland Barthes states in “The Rhetoric of the Image,” it is an example of intentional signification.⁶ Advertisements can also amplify the process

of signification present in all discourse. In *Gender Advertisements*, sociologist Erving Goffman examines representations of gender and concludes that these texts, like all signification, standardize, exaggerate and simplify ideology and ritual but do so in an amplified manner akin to what he terms “hyper-realization.”⁷ In other words, advertising serves as a discursive locus that produces a powerful set of meanings that, while self-consciously stylized, are still influential to shaping the material landscape.

My approach to advertisements also borrows from the work of cultural critic Judith Williamson, whose *Decoding Advertisements* provides an insightful critique of the relationship between texts and their perceived viewers. She argues that advertisements create a sense of “alreadyness.” Viewers “do not simply buy the product in order to *become* a part of the group it represents: you must feel that you already, naturally, belong to that group and *therefore* you will buy it.”⁸ This analysis fails to account for negotiated or oppositional readings, but her point is well taken. In the context of advertising a neighborhood, this act of interpellation affects people’s understanding of a space and informs their orientation within it. The targeted readers of real estate ads are being invited into the neighborhood, but they are also assured that people like them are already there.

The idealized visions of what Columbia Heights is and could be affect how capital and people move through the neighborhood. The advertisements sell a particular version of Columbia Heights to middle and upper-middle class residents. This version promises the urban experience, cloaked in diversity, but without any of the stigmatized low-income people of color that may remind incoming residents of the structures of inequality that order urban space.

Even residents that are not directly persuaded by the specific ads I discuss continuously reinforce the narrative of Columbia Heights these ads discursively produce. They use the narrative's language. They praise diversity abstractly, while expressing distaste for the behavior of their low-income neighbors. Often times they express outrage about the current state of the neighborhood, echoing their role as a consumer. They have been sold the new Columbia Heights and they want their money's worth. Even their optimism about the neighborhood's future activates the advertorial narrative that Columbia Heights is "transitioning." The imagined future, given many of their statements, resembles the hip and multicultural but solidly upper middle-class Columbia Heights shown in glossy advertisements and multi-story banners.

I do not argue that newcomers were solely influenced by these marketing campaigns. Some of the language of revitalization and gentrification circulated among residents and planners before the ads are even created. The marketing campaigns play off of potential consumers' existing knowledge about urban space and diversity. They reinforce certain ideas and desires and create new ones. In turn, those who view the ads change their perception of Columbia Heights, creating a feedback loop in which audiences and ads reinforce one another's narrative. There are negotiated and oppositional readings along the way, but a lot of the sentiments in the ads also appear in my conversations with residents.

These ads affect the built environment of Columbia Heights in standard and subtler ways. Above all, these ads persuade people to buy or rent particular properties. If these buildings sell well then more developers are encouraged to build similar buildings. If these buildings do not sell they may be converted into something different. On a literal

level, the ads affect what buildings stay in Columbia Heights and what people live there. By creating a “map” of Columbia Heights devoid of racial and class tension, the ads attract residents who want to buy into that narrative despite the fairly obvious signs of inequality on the streets. Furthermore, the advertisements validate the idea that middle and upper-middle-class people should demand upscale development and a disproportionate amount of resources. If low-income people are inferior or absent it is much easier to justify their continued neglect. The people that come to Columbia Heights with this map ingrained in them are less likely to correspond with longtime residents of color. They are less likely to understand or advocate for low-income residents’ needs and desires.

In short, if the ads are successful- which, given the fact that all buildings have sold fairly well, they are- then low-income residents of color are perceived as alien, inferior, and less valuable. The devaluation of low-income residents of color (the actual residents, not the commodifiable abstractions of race and class that sell urban authenticity) runs through some of what respondents talked about. There were stories about fighting for a dog park that would have closed a park long-used by black residents. There were stories about low-income residents that were too messy and did not care about their neighborhood. There were also stories about the desire to fight inequality. Ethnographic analysis illustrates how residents reinforce and contest dominant narratives. However, it became clear during my interviews that the discourse of diversity used to sell Columbia Heights was affecting who invested in the neighborhood and how they conceptualized the neighborhood once they got here.

Connections between discourse and material space have been explored by both Christopher Mele and Arlene Davila. Mele's analysis of the development of New York's Lower East Side in the late 20th century uncovers the linkages between narratives in cultural production about the Lower East Side and the political economic processes within the area.⁹ Davila's work on New York's East Harlem similarly highlights the importance of spatializing discourse and examining its effect on power and access to resources. "The marketing and commercialization of urban space in El Barrio," she argues, "is not a contest over the signification of outdoor surfaces, or of East Harlem's public identity as a Latino neighborhood, as much as it is a confrontation over who is involved in El Barrio's definition, and for what ends."¹⁰ Real estate advertisements are part of the discourse that shapes Columbia Heights. The narratives they present, the people and things they distort and disappear, the audiences they target and create; all of these processes directly affect both people's understanding of Columbia Heights and the physical built environment.

Though this chapter focuses on a handful of specific examples of advertisements, this small selection was gleaned from a thorough review of real estate advertising for Columbia Heights. Using a random sampling technique, I researched ads in several area newspapers and magazines from the years 1998 through 2008.¹¹ The beginning of that period marks the year before the long-delayed opening of the Metrorail subway station in fall of 1999. From the idea of a future Metrorail stop in the 1990s to the actual station that spurred new construction in the mid 2000s, this ten-year period represents the end-stages of vast disinvestment and a period of new investment and growth in the neighborhood.

By choosing a thorough random sample I was able to research a diverse set of periodicals. The periodicals that had the most real estate advertising for Columbia Heights were the *Washington Post*, the Washington D.C. area's major daily newspaper with over 1.5 million readers daily, the *Washington City Paper*, a free alternative weekly with a circulation of over 79,000, and the *Washington Blade*, a local, weekly newspaper focused on LGBT issues with a circulation of 33,800 readers.¹²

The monthly, upscale lifestyle magazine *DC* also contained some advertisements for Columbia Heights real estate, as did the free monthly newspaper the *InTowner*, which specifically focuses on northwest neighborhoods in Washington D.C., including Columbia Heights. Some periodicals were researched but were not used in this study, such as the daily newspaper *The Washington Times*, the monthly, upscale magazine *Washingtonian*, and weekly papers such as the Spanish language *Washington Hispanic* and the *Afro American*, a newspaper reporting on African-American issues serving the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore regions. Though they have the potential to offer a unique perspective given their target audiences, the ads included in those papers were either not specific to Columbia Heights property or contained a small number of straightforward ads featuring short descriptions of amenities.

After my initial research, I chose to focus on ad campaigns for four buildings- Highland Park, Kenyon Square, Park Triangle, and the Fedora- because of their prominence in the periodicals and the frequency with which they appeared. I also chose these ads because they contained more representation. The ads more explicitly constructed narratives about Columbia Heights beyond the quotidian enumerations of amenities, location, and price found in a large portion of real estate ads. Because the

marketing campaigns were well funded, the ads are bright, noticeable and contain creative flourishes such as staged photos and a symbolic marketing language. Visual representations of the neighborhood and the actors portrayed living in it open an especially rich site filled with significations of race, class, and sexuality. Representing the bodies of Columbia Heights so literally they, like all visual culture, provide what Nicholas Mirzeoff calls a “sensual immediacy” unique from printed words.¹³

It would be a stretch to label these examples as wholly representative. Many of the ads for Columbia Heights real estate were small cramped squares of text placed by individual landlords. However, the condo ads’ continuous and conspicuous presence makes them useful for analyzing how advertisers sold some of the most high profile, newly constructed buildings in Columbia Heights. The analysis of these texts is not conclusive, but merely fleshes out possible implications of their representational logic. The reception of these ads’ ideology is not a foregone conclusion, but an investment in the complex reception of texts does not invalidate the importance of analyzing the symbolic logic within texts. As Mele, Davila, and countless other cultural critics have argued, the ideology of culture- even when contested- can have often devastating material results.

Including ethnography in this examination is vital to both temper textual analysis, and to get at the complexity of how diversity is operationalized by and between residents. As John Horton’s *The Politics of Diversity* articulates, conflict and coalition along race, ethnicity, and class lines constantly shift. Furthermore, these interactions are often ephemeral and hard to capture without ethnography.¹⁴ My inclusion of ethnography has

revealed sentiments that both confirm and complicate the rhetoric and ideology found in such texts as planning literature and, in this chapter, real estate marketing.

As I approached possible ethnographic projects to supplement my examination of real estate marketing, I began to think about the assumed reader. Who is being marketed this vision of Columbia Heights? I concluded that residents who had recently contemplated and ultimately moved to the area would be ideal respondents. Through online social networking sites, community listservs, and the catch-all communication hub Craig's List, I put out a call for residents of Columbia Heights who had moved to the neighborhood within the last five years.

From these solicitations, I garnered eleven willing respondents who vary in age, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Their occupations vary, but all were middle or upper-middle-class. Though I did not ask them about their income specifically, all occupied a relatively high social class. They were working in or working towards professions that require advanced degrees and are outside the service industry and other typically "working-class" professions.¹⁵ I conducted hour-long interviews with my respondents, prompting them with basic and intentionally vague questions about their relationship with the neighborhood (Appendix A).

All of the eleven respondents, when asked to list five words or phrases they associated with Columbia Heights, made reference to the neighborhood's diversity of population. Seven used the word "diversity" as one of their first words, and others used words such as "multicultural," "ethnic," "Hispanic" and "economically-mixed." During this exercise, some respondents spoke of Columbia Heights as being "vibrant," "fun," and "lively." Despite a similar emphasis on the diverse and lively environment touted in

real estate advertisements, over half the respondents also used more pejorative words and phrases such as “gentrifying,” “crime-ridden,” “strong criminal presence,” and “on the frontier.” These associative phrases are just the tip of substantial conversations that highlight and challenge the tropes present in real estate marketing.

The respondents were not self-selected readers of the ads analyzed here and, with the exception of one respondent, none of the people I spoke with lived in the buildings discussed in this chapter. As newcomers to Columbia Heights, however, they offer narratives of why they chose to live in Columbia Heights and what they value and dislike about the neighborhood. In that sense, they have all been sold Columbia Heights. Examining what did and did not sell them can be considered against real estate marketing campaigns that construct and order the values in Columbia Heights.

Selling the Difference

Before presenting an analysis of the advertisements, it is important to contextualize the buildings they sell. Most units had opening prices ranging from rental apartments in the \$2000 to \$3000 a month range to condominiums in the \$300,000 and \$400,000 range. Though most are market rate, recent “Inclusionary Zoning” laws require 20% of units to be affordable, a shift in affordable housing policy away from a reliance on rapidly disappearing Section 8 properties.

The Fedora is a building in the southern part of Columbia Heights offering 103 one- and two-bedroom condominium units that opened in 2006. It was built on the renovated site of the Pitts Hotel, a hotel made famous by its connection to D.C.’s early 20th century jazz scene. Developed by Bozutto Homes, a local development and

management company, the Fedora condominium units initially sold for prices in the low to mid \$300,000 range. By 2007 it had sold 80% of its units.¹⁶

The Park Triangle is an apartment building constructed in the early 2000s on a parcel adjacent to a relatively new supermarket and one block from the Metro subway station. Developed by Triangle Ventures and managed by Paradigm Management, the building offers 117 one- and two-bedroom rental units for \$2,000 to \$3,000 monthly. The building also houses ground-level retail such as a cell phone store, a fast food chicken restaurant, and a tutoring center. The apartments are now over 90% filled.¹⁷

In late 2005, local firm Donatelli Development led the construction of two of the neighborhood's most prominent residential buildings, Kenyon Square and Highland Park. Kenyon Square, a \$70 million building that opened in 2008, offers 153 one- and two-bedroom condominium units. The New York-based firm Domus Realty manages sales for the condominiums. Prices for the Kenyon Square units are in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range. A year before the building opened 80% of the condos had sold. That percentage has since reached almost full capacity.¹⁸ The 229 one- and two-bedroom units in Highland Park, also a \$70 million dollar building project, were initially marketed as condominiums but the building became a rental apartment building before it opened in 2008. Most apartments in the building are rented for \$2,000 to \$3,000 monthly. Despite the low 40% sold rate the year before it opened as condos, rental units at Highland Park's properties are now 99% filled.¹⁹

Both Kenyon Square and Highland Park are located directly above one of the two Metrorail station entrances and feature a variety of ground-level retail space. Kenyon Square houses establishments such as Starbucks, an American bistro-style restaurant and

bar, a specialty wine and beer shop, and a spa offering medical treatments such as Botox. Highland Park is home to Sig Financial bank, Potbelly's and Five Guys- two fast food sandwich shops- Tynan coffee shop, and Commonwealth, an upscale British gastropub.

All four of the buildings examined here are marketed as luxury urban apartments or condominiums. While the descriptors "luxury" and "urban" refer to the cost, amenities, and location of the units, there is something more to their branding. These adjectives do more than describe the building. They reference a particular kind of neighborhood as well. Countering popular conception that Columbia Heights is a disinvested, crime-plagued neighborhood, these ads imply that Columbia Heights itself is becoming a hot-spot of luxury, creativity, and leisure.

This targeted creative class also needs something a little more interesting than basic amenities. As my analysis will suggest, the racial and ethnic diversity seen in the bodies that populate the ads appeals to potential buyers and renters looking for a multicultural neighborhood. Given the long history of equating urban space with exotic, Othered people and cultures, I argue that adjectives like "urban," "urban living," and "vibrant community" reference not only location, but racial and ethnic diversity as well.²⁰ The use of these words also potentially references the neighborhood's authenticity. A specific and limited kind of diversity has become capital. Race, ethnicity, and sexuality operate the same way nightlife options and granite countertops do: another selling point for those that can afford to consume this repurposed neighborhood.

Throughout 2006, Highland Park ran a series of advertisements with the tag line "Your Neighborhood, Your World." Each ad features one or two models (presumably meant to represent Highland Park residents given the context) enjoying the many

amenities of the apartment building and Columbia Heights generally. If there was any question whether or not the creative class belongs in this historically black and recently Latina/o largely working-class neighborhood, this catchphrase assures the potential buyer/renter that Columbia Heights is *their* neighborhood. And, as if educated professionals needed another reminder, the ads assure them that this is in fact their world as well. Even if a potential reader was not consciously concerned with moving into and/or gentrifying a neighborhood, the ad shuts down issues of belonging before they have a chance to surface. In the “new” Columbia Heights, the creative class runs the show. Longtime residents are usually out of the frame, but even when they are present, youth and wealth are at the top of the hierarchies these ads reinforce.

Who does the “your” reference? In an ad featured in a April 2006 issue of the *Washington Post*, we see a white man and woman in their 20s or 30s running down the street laughing (Figure 48).²¹ The man is dressed in a fashionable knit cap and oversized sunglasses and the woman is wearing a business casual blazer and white collared shirt, also bedecked in oversized sunglasses. Both carry unmarked shopping bags. The oversized paper shopping bags are the kind found at department stores and boutiques rather than low-end or utilitarian venues like the supermarket or five and dime. The type and amount of bags in each hand establish that this couple has spent a lot of money for non-essential goods. Above the “Your Neighborhood, Your World” tagline, bold letters command the readers that it’s “High Time To Live It Up.” The text above the bold catchphrases reads, “Shop ‘til you drop... because home is right across the street.” In this case, the ideal Highland Park resident is wealthy enough to afford the condominium

(“from the upper \$200s”) and in addition to the ability to spend expendable income on shopping binges and the perfect outfit for such outings.

In a similar “High Time to Live It Up” advertisement, featured in both the *Washington Post* and the *Washington City Paper*, a white man and woman in their 20s or 30s enjoy an intimate laugh together, her arm draped around him as he looks on lovingly (Figure 49).²² She is in a denim jacket and he is in performance outerwear, holding a small, open paper bag (perhaps containing a shared pastry from a local café?) Based on their body language, it can be assumed that they are a romantically linked couple. However their relationship is read it is clear they are having the time of their lives on the streets of Columbia Heights.

Both these ads, in their depiction of fun and leisure, coax the reader with a message that says, “you should be here.” But, as Judith Williamson has argued, there is an alreadyness present in these ads. The reader should be here, but the models imply that the specific reader or, more accurately, the demographic of the reader, is already here. These ads thus invite the young, in this case white, middle and upper-middle class into Columbia Heights. They assure them that they are already there and will thusly feel welcome in this “new” Columbia Heights far removed from disinvestment, drugs, and economic hardship.

The introduction of white bodies into a space that has been criminalized and racialized in popular consciousness echoes the “mixed” philosophy that has been at the forefront of urban planning in recent years, combining New Urbanism’s desire for mixed-use neighborhoods with a more general desire for mixed-demographic neighborhoods of mixed-incomes and racial and ethnic diversity. This philosophy not only relies on the

assumption that mixed-use areas will make for sustainable, walkable cities, it also believes “mixed” residents will bring balance and a socialization model to correct crime, drugs, and other forms of deviance.²³ Middle and upper-middle-class residents’ presence, the logic goes, will lead to the proper socialization of deviant subjects.

**HIGHLAND
P A R K**

Shop 'til you drop... because home is right across the street. Condominium living at Highland Park means you're steps away from first-floor retail, the new gourmet Giant, and DC USA, host to Best Buy, Bed Bath & Beyond, WSC, and the city's first Target. You'll find a world of great shopping in Columbia Heights.

HIGH TIME TO LIVE IT UP
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR WORLD

Now selling!

- Atop Columbia Heights Metro
- From the upper \$200s
- 1BRs to 2BRs w/ den; lofts available
- Underground parking available
- Luxury finishes with balconies and terraces
- Two-level fitness center
- Rooftop terrace and party room

202.332.2000
highlandparkdc.com

Sales office located
at The Ellington:
1301 U St, NW • Suite 618
Daily 11 am – 5 pm
Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm

Sales by **DOMUS**
Equal Housing Opportunity

BROKERS WELCOME

RE

Figure 48. *Washington Post*, April 4 2006, pG7.



Shop 'til you drop... because home is right across the street. Condominium living at Highland Park means you're steps away from first-floor retail, the new gourmet Giant, and DC USA, host to Best Buy, Bed Bath & Beyond, Washington Sports Club, and the city's first Target. You'll find a world of great shopping in Columbia Heights.

HIGH TIME TO LIVE IT UP
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR WORLD

Now selling!

- Atop Columbia Heights Metro
- From the upper \$200s
- 1BRs to 2BRs w/ den
- Volume Lofts w/ nearly 20' ceilings
- Underground parking available
- Luxury finishes with balconies and terraces
- Two-level fitness center
- Rooftop terrace and party room
- Panoramic city views

877.596.1265

highlandparkdc.com

OPEN HOUSE

at The Ellington:

Daily 11 am – 5 pm

Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm

1301 U St, NW

Suite 618

Sales by **DOMUS**
realty

BROKER CO-OP 3%



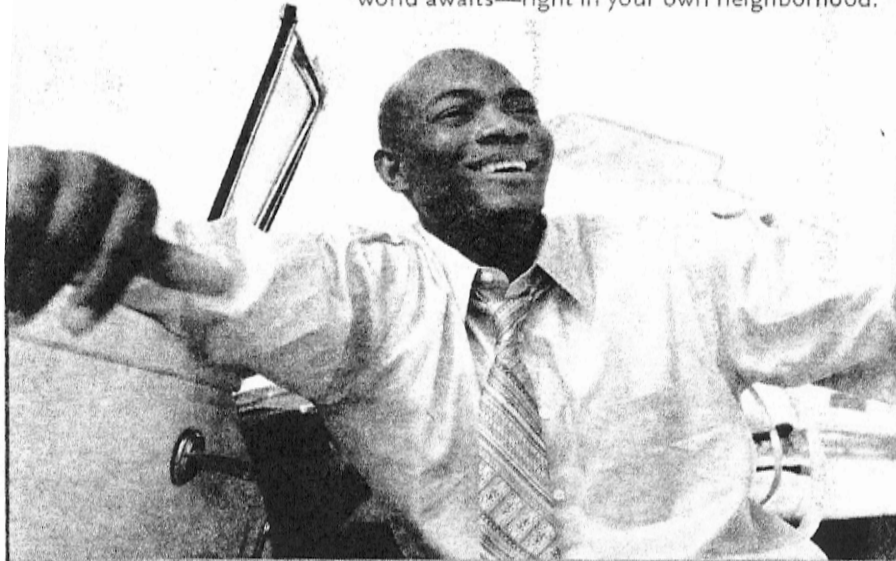
Figure 49. Washington City Paper, Sept. 22, 2007, p37.

The “you” in question in this series of ads is not exclusively heterosexual. Highland Park advertisements are also featured in the *Washington Blade*, Washington D.C.’s largest LGBTQ newspaper. Some of the advertisements appear unchanged, but the single, smiling, classed men in this context can be interpreted as gay men (Figure 50, 51).²⁴ In a more explicitly queer themed advertisement appearing only in the *Blade*, a white twenty- or thirty-something male couple smile lovingly into each other’s eyes as they sip glasses of red wine on Highland Park’s rooftop terrace. The ad’s text reads, “High Expectations. Your Neighborhood, Your World.” In this advertisement, gay men and their stereotypical role as consummate urban aesthetes are welcomed as one of the ideal candidates for the building, but the ad’s use of sexuality does not end there. The text at the top of the advertisement implores the reader to “reach new heights in a neighborhood that’s on the rise.” (Figure 52).²⁵

The pun goes beyond mere description, inviting the connection between gay men and gentrifying neighborhoods. Seeking out neighborhoods in the process of redeveloping and upscaling is not sexuality-specific, but this language operates within a well-worn narrative (from Manuel Castells to Richard Florida to *Will and Grace*) of gay men leading the charge of urban gentrification.²⁶ Gay men are not only being targeted in this advertisement, they are also being employed (as models in the ad and as renters) in the service of showing the legitimacy and effectiveness of Columbia Heights’ redevelopment. Sexual diversity becomes a commodity in the larger process of crafting this classed, racialized version of Columbia Heights.



At Highland Park, you'll find there are no limits to great urban living. Our luxurious condominiums feature contemporary design and unmatched amenities. With instant access to Metro, a new gourmet Giant, first-floor retail, and the soon-to-come shopping destination DC USA, a whole world awaits—right in your own neighborhood.



HIGH DESIGN IN URBAN LIVING
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR WORLD

Now selling!

- Atop Columbia Heights Metro
- From the upper \$200s
- 1BRs to 2BRs w/ den
- Volume Lofts w/ nearly 20' ceilings
- Underground parking available
- Luxury finishes with balconies and terraces
- Two-level fitness center
- Rooftop terrace and party room

202.332.2000
highlandparkdc.com

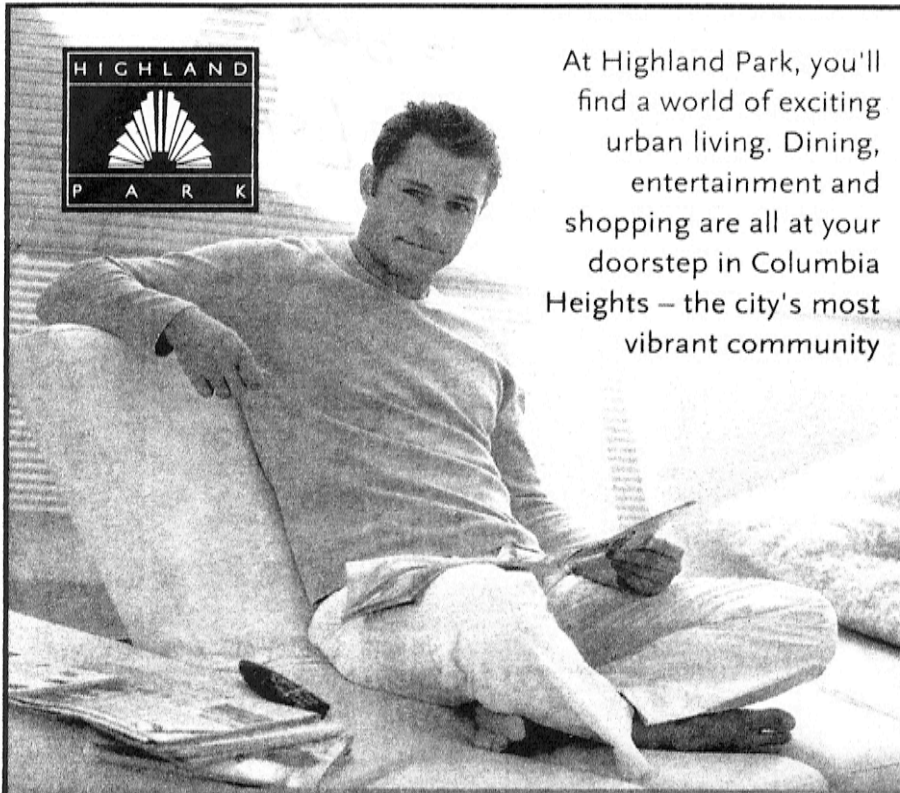
OPEN HOUSE
at The Ellington:
Daily 11 am – 5 pm
Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm
1301 U St, NW
Suite 618

Sales by **DOMUS**
realty

BROKER CO-OP 3%



Figure 50. *Washington Blade*, May 19, 2006, p84.



HIGHLAND
P A R K

At Highland Park, you'll find a world of exciting urban living. Dining, entertainment and shopping are all at your doorstep in Columbia Heights – the city's most vibrant community

HIGH DESIGN IN URBAN LIVING
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR WORLD

Now selling!

- Atop Columbia Heights Metro
- From the upper \$200s
- 1BRs to 2BRs w/ den
- Volume Lofts w/ nearly 20' ceilings
- First-floor retail, across from DC USA and the city's first Target
- Underground parking available
- Luxury finishes with balconies and terraces
- Two-level fitness center
- Panoramic city views

888.887.6153
highlandparkdc.com

OPEN HOUSE
at The Ellington:
Daily 11 am – 5 pm
Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm
1301 U St, NW
Suite 618

Sales by **DOMUS** realty

BROKER CO-OP 3%



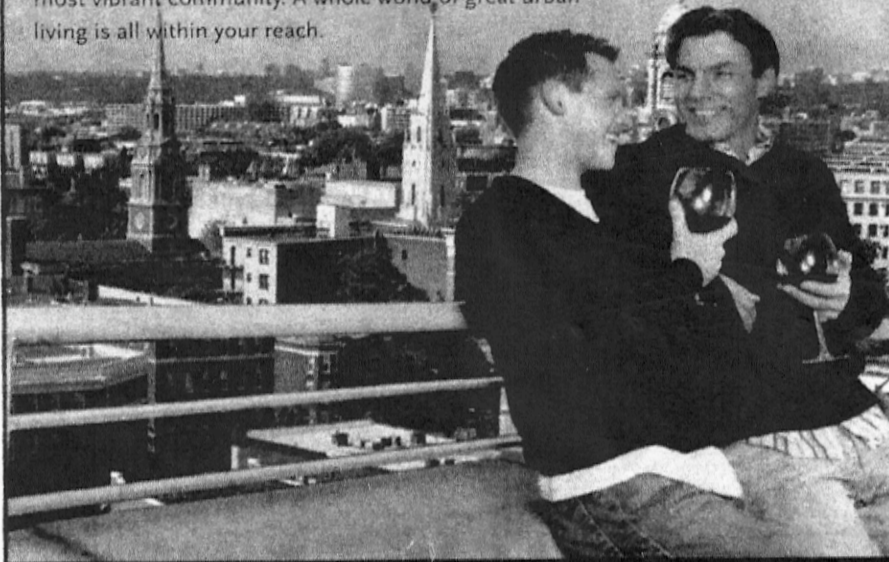
 

Figure 51. *Washington Blade*, Sept. 15, 2006, p41.

Reach new heights in a neighborhood that's on the rise. At Highland Park in Columbia Heights, you'll find great dining, entertainment and shopping, including a new gourmet Giant, first-floor retail, and soon-to-come retail destination DC USA with the new Target, all in the city's most vibrant community. A whole world of great urban living is all within your reach.



HIGH EXPECTATIONS

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR WORLD

Now selling!

- Atop Columbia Heights Metro
- From the upper \$200s
- 1BRs to 2BRs w/ den
- Volume Lofts w/ nearly 20' ceilings
- Underground parking available
- Luxury finishes with balconies and terraces
- Two-level fitness center
- Rooftop terrace and party room
- Panoramic city views

888.887.6153

highlandparkdc.com

OPEN HOUSE

at The Ellington:

Daily 11 am – 5 pm

Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm

1301 U St, NW

Suite 618

Sales by **DOMUS**
realty

BROKER CO-OP 3%



Figure 52. *Washington Blade*, Nov. 11, 2006, p73.

The “you” in these ads is also not exclusively white. Though the aforementioned ads configure Columbia Heights as a neighborhood that white people can both feel comfortable in and essentially own, racial and ethnic diversity is key to marketing Columbia Heights as enticingly “urban.” Like the aforementioned queer subjects, certain middle and upper-middle-class people of color are used to sell the neighborhood, both as models in ads and as residents in the buildings that make up the new Columbia Heights. On Highland Park’s web site and on the towering banners that hung on the building leading up to and after its opening, there is a veritable rainbow of faces (Figure 53, 54).²⁷ Though the models’ specific racial/ethnic identification can’t be known, the four recurring models on the web site and banners can be interpreted to be of Asian, Middle-Eastern, African, and Anglo descent. Next to these models, the banner reads “Life_360°” surrounded by a circle. The full circle motif may reference the amenity rich building and neighborhood, but juxtaposed with the multicultural bodies it can also refer to the racial/ethnic diversity of the building/neighborhood. Columbia Heights becomes a space of multicultural harmony, a circle of life or, more specifically, a circle of the good life.

The people of color featured in Highland Park’s marketing materials are young and wear stylish, expensive-looking clothes and accessories. The mere fact that they can afford Highland Park illustrates their membership in the professional class. In other “Your Neighborhood, Your World” advertisements, classed men of color can be seen living their life_360°. In addition to the ad that opened this chapter, there is an ad touting “High Design In Urban Living” with another twenty- or thirty-something black man lounging in his apartment smiling (Figure 50).²⁸ He wears a dress shirt and loosened tie, signaling his membership in the professional class.



**Figure 53. Banner hanging from Highland Park building.
(Photo by the author)**



Figure 54. www.highlandparkdc.com.

Racialized bodies in these advertisements may contribute to a multicultural aesthetic, but they present a very specific type of person. They are all young, attractive, and can be read as members of the middle and upper-middle class. Though it is not surprising that advertisements use aesthetically pleasing models, the ads construct the proper kind of person of color for the neighborhood, eliding the existence and experience of working-class people of color that have been central to Columbia Heights for decades.

As Arlene Davila has argued in her study of Latina/o niche marketing, *Latinos Inc.*, advertising often goes for an ethnic “look” that references people of color while still operating within the classed fantasy world of advertising.²⁹ In the context of racial and class tensions within urban development, these images of people of color cover over the seemingly unsalable residents that contribute to the neighborhood’s actual racial and

economic diversity. In Columbia Heights, diversity is integral as capital, but in the process of making it consumable, these glossy advertisements have rendered the experience of many people of color silent. This elision greases the wheels for upwardly distributive development.

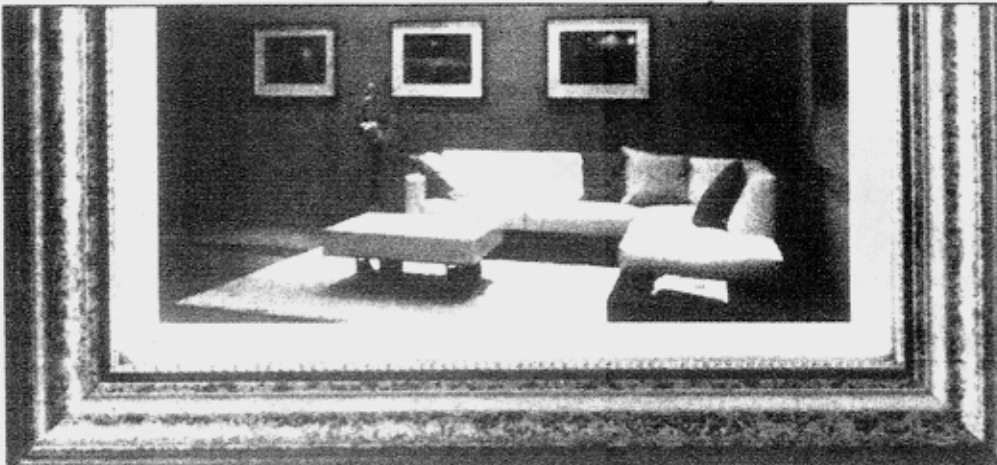
The use of racialized bodies in these advertisements can be used to sell to both white people and people of color. Racialized bodies reference a kind of diversity that makes Columbia Heights an appealing yet authentically “urban” space for white people. Race and ethnicity become a stylized window-dressing that amps up the value of multicultural neighbors, while allaying fears potential residents may have about the wrong kind of people of color.

For people of color, the existence of “residents” who share their social location can be an appealing selling point. On the surface, these multicultural ads seem to redress past discrimination and alienation in urban housing. As sociologist Herman Gray has argued, cultural visibility is not tantamount to a critical discussion of difference and power. Visibility allows for cultural pluralism without disrupting the hierarchies of race and class that order the nation. It can be a way to buy into the national imaginary, rather than a critique of it.³⁰ The representations tied to luxury condos create the fiction of widespread equal opportunity and non-white privilege, rhetorically solving the problem and shutting down future allegations of marginalization and claims for social services and or restitution.

The inclusion of racialized bodies in marketing corrects a representational absence, but solving alienation through the market fails to redress marginalization caused by the market (and government.) Residents of color may buy (or rent) in because of the

neighborhood's convenience, its racially and ethnically diverse history, or its upscale real estate markets' long-withheld embrace of people of color. Discussing race and ethnicity amidst "luxury" apartments and condominiums, however, necessitates a discussion of class as an intersecting variable that shapes the perceptions and alliances of the neighborhood's African-American and Latina/o residents. As sociologist Mary Pattillo has argued, *intraracial*, interclass interactions between residents are often embedded with ideals of racial uplift alongside a "role model" ethos that elides working-class residents' agency and perpetuates the myth of pathology.³¹ In Columbia Heights, middle and upper-middle-class residents of color may have a different relationship to the idea of the multicultural city, but their class inscribes certain power dynamics that complicate an alliance with the working-class and poor residents outside the frames of these advertisements.

Racialized aesthetics continue in the advertising for Park Triangle. A white man in his 20s or 30s addresses the reader with text overhead: "This is not just a lobby... it's my art gallery" (Figure 55).³² In another, a smiling twenty- or thirty-something black woman says the same (Figure 56).³³ Above both is a photo of the Park Triangle's lobby, furnished with a mod furniture and showcasing non-descript pieces of art on the walls. The photo of the lobby has been superimposed on another photo of a frame, driving home the gallery theme. Another advertisement invites potential renters to "Join us for 'Art at Park'," a showcase of "Washington D.C.'s established and emerging artists."³⁴ Finally, in yet another culture-themed advertisement, a conga drum is placed above a photo of Park Triangle's lobby. "If life is music," the ad reads, "this is your playlist. Ingeniously Modern Apartment Homes, with as Much Personality as You" (Figure 57).³⁵



**THIS IS NOT JUST A LOBBY...
IT'S MY ART GALLERY.**

One block to Columbia Heights Metro • Next to Tivoli Square and new Giant Food • Spacious apartments with stained-concrete floors • Garage parking • Open kitchens with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances • Controlled access • State-of-the-art fitness center • Cats and dogs allowed • Two months free*

Apartment homes from \$1,695 a month*

Two months free rent!*

*Applied to select apartments with a 13-month lease. Rent is per subject to change and reflect discount. See leasing consultant for details.

ParkTriangleApts.com | 866.893.5644

Park Triangle
apartments and townhomes

Owned and Developed by
Triangle Ventures

Managed by
Paradigm
MANAGEMENT


 **EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY**

Figure 55. *Washington Post*, Aug. 26, 2006, pAL12.



THIS IS NOT JUST A **LOBBY...**
IT'S MY **ART GALLERY.**

One block to Columbia Heights Metro • Next to Tivoli Square and new Giant Food • Spacious apartments with stained-concrete floors • Garage parking • Open kitchens with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances • Controlled access • State-of-the-art fitness center • Cats and dogs allowed • Two months free*

Apartment homes from \$1,695 a month*
Two months free rent!*

*Applied to select apartments with a 13-month lease. Rents are subject to change and reflect discount. See leasing consultant for details.

ParkTriangleApts.com | 866.893.8687

Park Triangle
apartment life and lots

Managed by:
Paradigm
MANAGEMENT LP

Owned and Developed by:
Triangle Ventures
a real estate development company

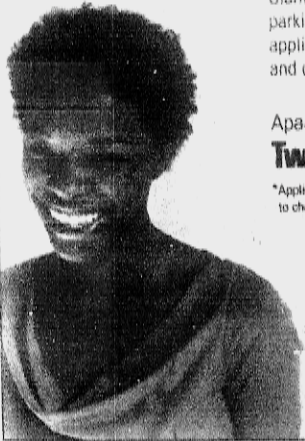


Figure 56. *Washington City Paper*, Sept, 1, 2006, p13.



IF LIFE IS MUSIC, THIS IS YOUR PLAYLIST

Ingeniously Modern
Apartment Homes, with
as Much Personality as You

One block to Columbia Heights Metro • Next to Tivoli Square and new Giant Food • Spacious apartments with stained-concrete floors • Garage parking • Open kitchens with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances • Controlled access • State-of-the-art fitness center • Cats and dogs allowed

Apartment homes from \$1,695 a month
One month free rent!*

* Applied to select apartments with a 13 month lease. Rents are subject to change and reflect discount. See leasing consultant for details.

Owned and Developed by **Triangle Ventures**
Managed by **Paradigm**
Washington, DC

Park Triangle
apartment lofts and flats
VISIT TODAY FOR YOUR PERSONAL TOUR!

ParkTriangleApts.com | 866.893.5644

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Figure 57. *Washington Post*, Sept., 23, 2006, pAL12.

These ads, appearing in the *Washington Post* and the *Washington City Paper* in 2006 and 2007, link Park Triangle to a creative pulse so important to the creative-class model of urban development. The advertisements implicitly reference Florida's "Bohemian Index" narrative of gentrification, formulating Park Triangle and Columbia Heights as a vibrant area of creative residents well on its way to upscaling. But this superficial investment in the arts also relies on a racialized conception of the urban.

The inclusion of a white and black body in the art gallery ads conjures a multicultural artist community so common and so valuable to gentrifying areas. The art

seen in the actual Park Triangle lobby aestheticizes urban decay. When I visited the apartment in early 2009, the local artwork in the lobby was a series of stylized photos of quintessentially urban artifacts: streetlights, dilapidated buildings in wide shot and close up. In the comfort of a new building made for the creative class, the material reminders of racialized poverty are included as aesthetic supplements. The use of aesthetic images of the urban is tied up with black urban culture. Crumbling buildings with graffiti and the landscape of the disinvested city conjures popular representations of the urban from film and television, representations that often included portraits of black city residents.³⁶ These images are removed from the context of the racism and classism that informs urban black life making it readily accessible for consumption.

The inclusion of ethnic musical artifacts such as the conga drum- Afro-Cuban in origin- illustrates a particular kind of creative pulse rooted in black cultural production but able to be consumed by all who can afford the rent. It references the black musical tradition but, but erasing the black musician, a wide range of potential consumers can place themselves behind the drum and within the lively urban milieu. Park Triangle's link to multicultural art allows its potential residents to feel edgy, urban and gritty while literally "framing" that grittiness in the context of luxury apartment lobbies.

In his study of gentrifying Wicker Park, Richard Lloyd pinpoints the process in which artists shift the meanings associated with disinvested neighborhoods. He argues, "for an admittedly small but disproportionately influential class of taste makers, elements of the urban experience that are usually considered to be an aesthetic blight become instead symbols of desire to master an environment characterized by marginality and social instability."³⁷ These sentiments were echoed in newcomers' pride that they were

not afraid of Columbia Heights in ways that their seemingly more provincial friends were. Lloyd's theorization also explains how Park Triangle's representation of art and artists do similar work, shifting disinvestment into an aestheticized commodity.

The construction of Othered groups' creative output as authentic and inherently superior has long been used in service of imperialist and racist ideologies. Blackness imbues creative output with value, but that blackness is often abstracted from the actual black people creating the work. It becomes a signifier rather than an identification that names actual people and actual systems of oppression. Creativity has been racialized and subsequently made consumable for middle- and upper-middle-class people. Park Triangle's marketing campaign uses racialized bodies and culture amidst a development paradigm built on increasing class disparity and racial marginalization. Even when racialized bodies are included, though, they are still two-dimensional images in an advertisement.

Images of embodied race are used in an advertising campaign that simultaneously extracts culture from the actual people of color that create it and forms it into a commodity for incoming residents. How did this safe, consumable version of the racialized urban milieu become so valuable? What advertorial narratives are reinforced and challenged by incoming residents? To partially explain how value and difference intersect in Columbia Heights, I turn to the experience of incoming residents.

Newcomers and the Faces of "Diversity"

As evidenced by the word association exercise referenced earlier, the respondents who have recently moved to Columbia Heights explicitly viewed the neighborhood's

diversity as an attraction and an asset. Their valuation of diversity and the immediacy in which they spoke of it shows that their reasons for coming to the neighborhood line up with the dominant scripts that have sold the neighborhood in marketing campaigns. The conversations that come after this initial lauding of diversity also illustrate ways that the ads' ideology is reinforced and challenged.

Though "diversity" can be a vague and amorphous term, many of the respondents specifically referenced economic, racial and ethnic diversity. Luke is a 64 year old Episcopal priest in the neighborhood. In 2004 he purchased a condominium in a rowhouse and now shares it with his partner, Charles. When asked why he chose to live in Columbia Heights he answers that, "in the first place, what I like most about living here is the multicultural piece of it."

Kevin is a 28 year old Chinese American, gay man who currently rents an apartment in the Highland Park building. Originally from Brooklyn, he spent time in Northern Virginia (where he works in real estate consulting,) before moving to the neighborhood six months ago. Connecting the neighborhood's population to his own social location, Kevin explains, "I have a tendency, since I am a multiple minority, I like to be in areas where there are multiple minorities.... For me, to the extent that I'm mixed ethnically, and being gay, it's just one of those things where it's sort of nice just seeing people who are different and not feeling like everyone has to be a drone. And it makes it very human." As a self-identified racial and sexual minority, Kevin's investment in diversity is tied to feeling comfortable in the space he chooses to make his home. The diversity he sees on the street affirms his own identifications.

Valuing a diverse racial demographic, however, was hardly exclusive to respondents of color. Caroline, a white 34-year-old law student, shares a rented house in the northern portion of Columbia Heights. Caroline moved to the area from Texas, where she owns property, but is originally from Northern Virginia. “When I got here,” she says, “I was really pleasantly surprised about how evenly divided racially [it was]. It seemed like, really 1/3 Latino, 1/3 black, and 1/3 white, and that was really nice and I didn’t expect that.” Later she adds, “to me that is a lot more pleasant than always feeling like a minority or something.” For Caroline, a lack of racial and ethnic diversity can prove alienating for people of color and white residents. Caroline’s statements reinforce the idea that a balance of racial and ethnic difference is inherently valuable, an idea that has been used to justify an influx of white residents. She also does not unpack the differential power relations between being a white minority and being a resident of color in the minority. Despite this, while Caroline and others did cite racial, ethnic, and class tensions in Columbia Heights, her sentiments recognize diversity as one way to prevent spatial alienation.

Though most of the respondents listed racial, ethnic and class diversity as one of the first things they valued about Columbia Heights, this praise was sometimes followed by concern. In some of the respondents’ comments, the language of diversity was often tied to narratives of tension and safety. This discursive pairing complicates respondents’ celebration of diversity.

David is a 29 year old man who came to the area to work as a consultant for the federal government. Since buying his condominium in the southern portion of Columbia Heights in late 2006, he married and shares the condo with his wife. When describing the

neighborhood, David told me, “as much as I like the neighborhood for the stratification of people on all different spectrums, and as much as I like all of the shopping arrangements that you have here... as much as I enjoy that, the crime is so alarming that a long-term staying arrangement may not be suitable for a married young family.” David also revealed, “I do not go down my own street at night. Just because it is so violent, and I never have any idea what’s going to happen along that street at any given time.”

Narratives of Columbia Heights as dangerous and crime-ridden have been used to justify continued disinvestment, but the narratives in recent real estate ads purposely downplay the reality of crime in Columbia Heights. David’s surprise and alarm about the amount of crime implies that he did not believe Columbia Heights would be as dangerous as it was. Perhaps David was influenced by the new narrative of Columbia Heights that erases low-income residents and their subsequent problems. Both narratives- erasing crime and highlighting crime- are used to justify the disinvestment in low-income people by erasing or policing them, but the recent narrative does so while simultaneously investing in middle-class residents.

David’s discomfort with his perception of safety is discursively inseparable from what he articulated as “socio-economic stratification.” His choice of “stratification” is telling as, in this context, it refers to a general description of the racial, ethnic, and class diversity he values but also doubles as a descriptor for hierarchies of social location linked to his concerns about safety and criminality. For David, stratification along lines of race, ethnicity, and/or class is always already encoded with the potential for violence.³⁸

Beth voiced a similarly themed paradox about the benefits and detractions of living in a neighborhood with socio-economic diversity. Beth is a 32 year old white

woman who has been renting an apartment in the northern part of Columbia Heights since 2006. She is originally from Ohio, but spent time in Chicago before coming to the area to earn her Ph.D. in Psychology. I spoke with Beth and her friend Shaunna simultaneously. Both valued the neighborhood's diverse demographics, but Beth added, "it's very interesting too now because we have made comments before where I'll be walking around the neighborhood and it's like: hey there's a lot of young white girls now, single girls, which before it would not have been that way." She paused to reflect before continuing. "I too value [diversity] a great deal," she said, "but there's a line at which... can I afford, with what I look like, to be walking out in a neighborhood. Am I the one who gets to make that step?"

Beth's comments imbue "diversity" with meaning beyond general description of demographics or wholly positive appreciation. Beth's investment in diversity is immediately tempered by her wariness of physically enacting the diverse street. Perceived race, gender, and class are variables that make specific on-the-ground interactions dangerous for some. In this case, Beth implies that whiteness and femaleness can lead to violence, presumably inflicted by male low-income and/or people of color. This violence is not the kind of salable grit that sells condos. It hits too close to home.

Beth's recognition of the risk women disproportionately face in urban space puts her on the losing side of how difference is operationalized on the street. Simultaneously, though, she reinforces racist narratives of dangerous black and Latino men. Beth's comments illustrate the negotiation of difference and power (in this case gender, race, and class) not often discussed in the celebratory narratives of diversity instrumental in selling Columbia Heights. It is not that these complications annul the appreciation of

diversity, but it does tie “diversity” as a concept with assumptions about the threat of low-income men of color in the neighborhood.

These conversations also elucidate the politics inscribed in the language of diversity. Diversity and other words describing the varied socio-economic residents of Columbia Heights, were often imbued with negative connotations referencing crime and safety. These rhetorical moves continued in other portions of my ethnographic inquiry. Even seemingly issues like spatial aesthetics and trash have been racialized and classed. These reflections are indicative of what linguist Gabriella Modan, in her ethnography of the neighboring Mt. Pleasant area, *Turf Wars*, has called the “politics of filth.”³⁹ In my own ethnographic analysis I argue that the frustration and contempt respondents register when discussing trash and dirt is sometimes subtly conflated with working class people of color. These subtle rhetorical moves are often where the dominant narrative of multicultural celebration shows its cracks.

At one point, Beth compared Columbia Heights favorably to the adjoining U Street area, discussed earlier in my analysis of the Fedora condominium building. “It’s dirtier, it’s a little scarier,” she says. “The people are dressed not as nice, and they’re kind of freaky some of them... I don’t care what color they are, they’re going to say that they’re scary.” Beth doesn’t unpack what constitutes “freaky” and “scary,” but she does support her critique by calling on a hypothetical affirmation from people of color. This rhetorical move implies that, as a white, middle-class woman, she feels that her comments could be taken as a racist critique. She uses imagined people of color to deflect her critique, possibly the middle-class people of color used to sell the cleaned up, multicultural Columbia Heights. The specter of white-led racism haunts her comment and

qualification, placing adjectives like “dirty,” “freaky,” and “sketchy” within the context of race and power. This is not to say that Beth conflates those words with *all* people of color. This is evidenced by her hypothetical support from some imagined people of color configured as different and/or better than the dirty, freaky, or sketchy people that are implicitly people of color. Her comments nonetheless tie race to a string of negative descriptors of cleanliness and comfort.

Describing her northern Columbia Heights block, Sarah said,

we definitely live in a more Latino part of the neighborhood and there’s also African-American sections. It seems like there’s just a ton of different types of people in the neighborhood, so that’s why I like the word ‘eclectic’ to describe it. I think it’s definitely a little on the grimmer side, but not in a terrible way. You know, just every once in awhile you’re kind of like, why is there so much trash on the ground?

Later in our conversation, she told me that her frustration with the amount of trash in the neighborhood is shared with some longtime residents, but a lot do not prioritize the concern in the same way that some newcomers have. Reading that assessment alongside her initial comments, trash, grime and longtime residents of color are rhetorically connected. The racial and ethnic “eclecticism” does not directly result in the neighborhood being “on the grimmer side,” but some longtime residents (mostly working-class people of color) are linked to trash because they have allowed filth to flourish. These statements place positive value on neighborhood cleanliness, simultaneously ordering newcomers as those who understand that value and longtime residents as those associated with the negative value of litter.

Sarah paid to move to a neighborhood on the rise and should not have to tolerate litter. Certain longtime residents that do not share this consumer ethos are figured as alien. Longtime residents’ perceived amorality for not picking up litter combines with a

disconnect felt by newcomers when longtime residents do not demand the same kinds of amenities as recent consumers of Columbia Heights. This combination leads to a devaluation of longtime residents that reflects the ethos of advertising campaigns that create and attract middle and upper-middle-class consuming subjects.

Kevin described the feel of Columbia Heights similarly. First, he opined that having a substantial Hispanic and African-American community is “positive for everybody’s sake.” He did not extrapolate about why that was, illustrating how ingrained the ideology of diversity is. It is taken as fact without the need to explain, especially without the need to explain sticky subjects like power, racism, and classism. Kevin then noted the mix of upscale and implicitly not-upscale buildings in the area around the Metro station. “You have little buildings tucked away. I mean we’re next to a clinic,” he exclaims, laughing. “You need a little bit of grit and grime in order to be able to keep and foster a creative class.”⁴⁰

Here, grit and grime are assets to the creative class. What is the grit and grime of which he speaks? It may well be the literal “crap and dirt” in streets and on building facades that he references later in our conversation. But this talk of dirt and grime immediately follows his discussion of racial diversity. The proximity of these statements ties residents of color to the negatively inflected language of “grit and grime.” The effect is potentially two-fold. First, tying race to “grit and grime” devalues racial difference as something unpleasant. However, it also uses race as a commodity to sell upscale Columbia Heights. Echoing the appropriation of multicultural bodies and symbols in real estate marketing, Kevin’s comments reductively configure gritty, racialized, and classed space as the capital needed to grow the incoming professional class.

Praising diversity while simultaneously constructing longtime residents of color as somehow dirty or dangerous fits within the ideology presented by Columbia Heights real estate ads. Residents value abstracted diversity, but claim superiority over longtime residents in subtle ways. Like the ads, residents place value on abstracted diversity while figuring themselves as better than longtime residents. The dominant discourse of diversity and development in present-day Columbia Heights has invited this kind of thinking into the neighborhood. It has validated the influx of middle and upper-middle class residents and their specific consumption priorities. It has reassured these residents that they are a higher priority than the low-income residents of color who threaten to sully new Columbia Heights with crime and trash. In short, the marketing campaigns I examine are co-constitutive of the sentiments newcomers express.

Undergirding these examples of rhetorical racialization is an acknowledgement that racial, ethnic, and class diversity can cause perceived and real tension. These tensions can play out in newcomers' feelings about safety and crime. Rowan, a 30 year old Chinese American federal employee who moved to Columbia Heights from suburban Philadelphia, views crime as a charged issue but one that can be productively dealt with community-wide. "It's a matter of pressing within the neighborhood of a cohesive voice and trying to reach out to all different levels, socioeconomic levels," she said. "We have a right to exist in this neighborhood. We're not trying to drive anybody out, but you can't go around doing drug deals on the street corner, which I have seen." Rowan's comments reference the drama of gentrification unfolding in the neighborhood. Her protest that she belongs in the neighborhood implies she may feel conflicted about her role in gentrification or, at the very least, that has faced real or perceived criticism.

Her “right” to be in the neighborhood may come from a general sense of private property rights, but it also matches up with the language of consumer rights. As an incoming upper-middle-class resident, she has invested in the neighborhood she was sold and, in return, she expects to get what she paid for. For Rowan, safety is a potentially unifying concern that can build coalition between the incoming “we” and longtime residents wary of displacement by and because of incoming middle- and upper-middle-class residents.

At another point in the interview, Rowan further articulated her frustration with crime: “it’s a shame because it’s such a nice area. I love the street we live on and I love the convenience of everything, but sometimes when I walk past some of the streets where you hear those crimes happening, you’re like ‘dude, how hard is it to get rid of...’ I know it’s a horrible thing to say and I feel terrible saying it or thinking it.” Rowan did not finish her thought, leaving the exact element in need of removal absent. Her aggravation points to a paradox repeated in several of the respondents’ narratives. If socio-economic diversity can foster both joy and anxiety among incoming residents, what can be done now and in the future to solve the paradox? What and who is “gotten rid of?” In Rowan’s unfinished equation, the imagined future of Columbia Heights is contingent on removal and displacement.

As newcomers to a rapidly changing neighborhood, most respondents were aware that the racial, ethnic, and class diversity they value is potentially threatened by rising housing costs and a general influx of middle to upper-middle-class people. For instance, Luke was adamant about keeping the balance saying, “I would repeat, the thing that I

care most deeply about is that the neighborhood stabilize and not become another pocket of affluence, where everybody under a certain income level moves out or is forced out.”

Luke is rhetorically invested in keeping some working-class residents in the neighborhood. As a pastor who does charity work, he is invested in the wellbeing of low-income residents. Yet Luke assumes that the neighborhood was not stable before middle and upper-middle-class residents came. The comments imply low-income communities of color are inherently flawed and ignore the possibility that “stabilization” could be achieved by giving low-income communities resources. Instead, he relies on assumptions about the value of “mixed” communities and the value of white residents. While he does not want upper-class residents to overrun the neighborhood, his discussion of stabilization implies that some are indeed necessary for the neighborhood’s success. This came up numerous times during our interview, illustrating his concern.

Shaunna, a biracial teacher in her 30s, expressed ambivalence towards gentrification as a process, implicating herself in that process while she simultaneously articulated some benefits. “Gentrification can be a dirty word or a good word,” she tells me. “I think gentrification is good because it can bring a lot of good things to a neighborhood.... But you know, I bought a house here, which means that somebody got displaced who maybe wanted to be here. It drives up the prices, which if you own your house it’s fine just as long as you can afford to pay your taxes. Maybe you can’t, so you maybe get a different house. So you know, it’s the good and the bad.” For her, Columbia Heights was not an empty neighborhood waiting to be populated and developed. Despite her belief that gentrification can and does improve neighborhoods, she also acknowledges that it produces a negative material effect. Those with resources are able to claim territory

forcefully through the market. For Shaunna, moving to Columbia Heights is not just configured as an apolitical decision based on location and amenities. Her concerns about the ethics of her presence in the neighborhood illustrate a consciousness of inequitable development, one that ran through several respondents' narratives. Shaunna's consciousness of longtime residents' potential desire to stay in the neighborhood challenges the narrative of the empty city, but that acknowledgement did not change her decision to buy in the area.

The same redevelopment that drew respondents to a formerly disinvested neighborhood also threatens to eliminate the socio-economic diversity that drew them here. As a graduate student in urban planning, Mary is especially attuned to this problem. Mary is a 52 year old white, gay woman who has owned a home in the northern part of Columbia Heights since April of 2003. She speaks in solution-oriented language, asking "how can redevelopment not push out affordability?" Mary's concern echoes Luke's and both comments configure the urban development process as a chronology going from disinvestment, development, and diversity before often veering towards homogenous affluence.

Mary also relays a story about the day she moved into the neighborhood. "The door was open and the movers were moving in," she tells me. "Two African-American women walked by on the sidewalk and said, 'here it is, it's starting. They're going to start pushing all the black folks out.' And I'm like [here she made a devastated face]. I hate to hear that, because that was in no way my intent." Mary's frustration at being misunderstood reveals that everyday interactions between residents of diverse social locations can be filled with misinterpretation and disconnects. Mary focuses on her intent

while the women on the street are focused on her action. Both interpretations have weight. Her story reveals the tension between intent and action. Despite Mary's desire not to push working-class people out of the neighborhood, she is implicated in the gentrification process. Her anecdote also reveals that often times the politics of territory and belonging are played out on the ground, in whispers, nods and conversations far from the halls of neighborhood forums and planning meetings.

I asked all of the respondents to describe the interactions they saw in Columbia Heights in addition to their own interactions with neighbors and other people in the area. Their stories again complicate the celebration of diversity, acknowledging the tension that often arises between residents of perceived social groups. Ryan is a 22 year old man who moved to the northern part of Columbia Heights in 2008. He is from Rhode Island originally but moved to Washington, D.C for a job at a not-for-profit focusing on pedestrian-oriented city planning. He shares a townhouse with roommates. He tells me that he views the neighborhood as segregated:

Not in terms of people on the street, but just socially... the neighborhood you live in maybe, but the people you know in that neighborhood tend not to be integrated. So that's a missed opportunity.... It's relaxed, but there are tensions. On the surface it's very relaxed. Walking down the street it's very relaxed. But when you get into the community and start talking to people, it's not relaxed.

Ryan's description of segregation, which he believes is mostly along class lines but along racial/ethnic lines as well, is framed in terms of the surface visual of the street. The ephemeral interactions and mixing of diverse people on the street offers the aesthetic of diversity, belying existing tension.

For Ryan, the diversity of Columbia Heights is a literal reflection of demographics rather than a meaningful coalition of different races, ethnicities, and

classes. My ethnographic analysis throughout this dissertation shows that people of varying social location do in fact make “contact” with one another. Ryan, however, points to a tension and a segregation that is covered over by the dominant discourse of multicultural harmony. As an incoming resident, he knows the Columbia Heights sold to people like him is not the Columbia Heights he experiences on the ground.

As upper-middle-class black residents, Shaunna and her husband’s class and race have given them access to both sides of the race and class divide. “I feel like we’re young professionals in the neighborhood, starting a new family,” she tells me, “but we’re also visible minorities, so we get to hear people who think of their class because we’re sort of middle, upper middle-class, but we’re also minorities, so the people who have been here a long time will also talk to us and give us the skinny on what happens. And it’s fine because I think they also get along with other people, but you can definitely tell there are these differences and things where they diverge.”

Shaunna then relays a story about talking with a longtime black resident:

He was saying, ‘some of these young white people move in and they just look at every black kid walking down the street and they think: gangster, gangster, drug dealer, drug dealer, gangster, gangster.’ And we’re like, ‘oh yeah, okay,’ and we were kind of laughing because literally we were having a conversation with a couple of our white neighbors the day before who were saying, ‘yeah, those guys who hang out on the corner they’re all drug dealers and gangsters.’

Her story points to the divergent perceptions of residents in social location. It also illustrates how perceived social location tempers which perceptions about race, ethnicity, and class will be voiced. As a woman of color, Shaunna was a sympathetic ear to those frustrated at racist, incoming white people, but because of her class, she was also trusted with classed and racialized sentiments among wary white residents. Trust, context, and

audience affect what someone is willing to reveal, illustrating the silences, implications, and allegiances that make up the dance of racialized and classed interaction in a demographically diverse space.

Furthermore, Shaunna's story further reminded me of the limits of my own ethnographic inquiry. As a white, middle-class, relative newcomer I too become a trusted ear for some and an object of wariness for others. As discussed in the previous chapter, longtime residents were often self consciously polite when it came to talking about white people. In this portion of my ethnography, however, many newcomers felt comfortable providing candid assessments of how race and class operated in the neighborhood.

On the whole, Caroline believes that "things are actually very good" in the neighborhood, but she also identifies how interactions are mediated by social location. She tells me that "there's a little bit of wariness and distrust perhaps among people of my age and maybe even older, and teenager/young adult, mostly African-Americans in the neighborhood, because of the shootings and this perception that kids are maybe a little out of control." It wasn't clear if Caroline agreed with those perceptions, but in her experience, this racialized tension is embedded in ephemeral interactions on the street. Caroline told me that once she was shocked to witness a white bicyclist cut off a young African-American girl crossing the street. Caroline frames this as a racialized event. She explicitly politicizes what other may frame as an apolitical act of rudeness. For Caroline, there are few interactions in Columbia Heights that are not inflected with race and class-based power relations.

Zoe, a 25-year-old city planner who has been in Columbia Heights since 2007, conceptualizes violence directed at white residents as a product of growing resentment towards gentrification and displacement:

The summer I moved here, there was this problem going on where groups of kids would just start throwing rocks at people. I think that's stopped but I think it's kind of endemic of the fact that the neighborhood is changing, so maybe kids who were born here and grew up here, are seeing people move into their neighborhoods and the prices were rising at the time. So I think from a social perspective, there needs to be more interaction between the different groups in the neighborhood, the people who have been here for awhile.... I think it might be helpful if we could get those groups working together more, just to have a better common understanding.

Zoe's summary of kids "just throwing rocks at people" implies that the attacks were unprovoked, allowing newcomers to be innocent victims in a way that mirrors discussions about crime on the listserv I examine in chapter five. Zoe also looks beyond the ethics of the individual act of violence and pinpoints the larger context of a political- and what I would call differently violent- process of development in Columbia Heights. The tension that Zoe speaks to is linked to a larger conceptual process that creates a newcomer/longtime resident distinction. More than the distinction between residents, I argue that advertising and some respondents conceptualize two different spaces: a new and old Columbia Heights.

The Foundations of the "New" Columbia Heights

An integral part to all real estate marketing is announcing amenities in both the dwelling being advertised and in the surrounding neighborhood. Advertising for new apartment and condominium buildings in Columbia Heights is no exception. Examining the *kind* of amenities and resources advertised, however, illustrates how the

neighborhood is being discursively constructed in these texts. I argue that the rebranding of this “new” Columbia Heights has aimed to contort and collapse “old” Columbia Heights and the longtime residents of color that populated the old neighborhood. The history of Columbia Heights is either erased to smooth the transition to the “new” or it is formed into a distant memory and used to strengthen the appeal of the neighborhood as authentically urban. Either way, the ads for the Kenyon Square condominium building and the Park Triangle apartment building reveal that Columbia Heights’ redevelopment is heralded as a space of luxury and leisure well suited for incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents. In order to create a safe space for investment, this new map of Columbia Heights must erase anything that could potential threaten investment: in this case, low-income people of color.

In the spring and summer of 2007, Domus Realty placed several advertisements in the *Washington Post*, the *Washington City Paper*, the *Washington Blade*, and *DC* magazine highlighting Kenyon Square’s proximity to neighborhood amenities. In the *Washington Post*, three 3”x 2” boxes appear scattered throughout the Real Estate listing page. With white, stylized text against a simple black background, they catch they eye and link to one another with their distinct style. Each starts off with the words “Kenyon Square.” Underneath, one reads, “Lobby door to Columbia Heights Metro escalator” then in bold, “21 steps.” The ad below reads, “Kenyon Square. Starbucks. Scone. Columbia Heights Metro. 2.3 min.” Below and to the left another ad reads, “Kenyon Square. Elevator. Down button. Columbia Heights Metro. 46 sec” (Figure 58).⁴¹

Earlier, an ad appearing in the *City Paper* gives a list of street-level features: “Columbia Heights Metro station entrance. Retail shops and services including

Starbucks, BB+T, Georgetown Valet, FedEx Kinko's and Radiance MedSpa and d'vines fine wine and beer. Top notch restaurants including The Heights (from the owners of Logan Tavern.)”⁴² Some of the aforementioned ads simply reveal the proximity to public transportation, an integral component of living in an urban area. Many of the amenities were tenants located in the Kenyon Square building itself, making them a natural choice for inclusion. It also advertises that these upscale amenities are so close that incoming residents do not even have to leave their immediate area. The ads promise to keep residents fully immersed in this highly controlled world of amenities set off from the perceived uncontrolled chaos of the black, Latina/o, and poor city. Most of the amenities listed are also attached to class status and cultural capital.

These “steps/minutes” advertisements flow with the rhythm of the leisure and amenity-filled life of the implied buyer. They promise a world of luxury not only in the \$400,000 to \$700,000 condo, but on the streets of Columbia Heights as well. For instance, the ad featuring Starbucks (“Scone. Columbia Heights Metro. 2.3 min”) uses several class markers to conjure up what kind of person is taking said steps.

Starbucks, home of the \$4 latte and a stylized, European (and thus upscale) lexicon of designer coffees and sizes, has become shorthand for pretension in mainstream culture. That the hypothetical resident buys something as classed as a scone adds yet another layer of cultural and class distinction.⁴³ Furthermore, Starbucks is tied with neighborhood development. Starbucks has historically opened stores in neighborhoods that are beginning to gentrify or areas that already have a high concentration of middle- to upper middle-class professionals moving through them. Washington D.C. is also home to Starbucks franchises started by Magic Johnson, the culmination of a partnership to aid

development in urban areas such as D.C. and Los Angeles. Therefore, Starbucks has significant and varied symbolic significance tied to the development of neighborhoods.

FALL DELIVERY
KALORAMA
court
 1 Bedroom & 1 Bedroom plus 1 Bath
 Luxury Condos from \$400K
 Home, location, and convenience. The Kalorama Court is a new, high-end, luxury building in the heart of the city. It's a perfect blend of modern design and classic architecture. The building is located in the heart of the city, just north of Kalorama Road.

202.344.5030
 www.kaloramacourt.com
 2417 17th Street NW, Suite 100
 just north of Kalorama Road
 Sales by: **McWilliams Ballard**

Brandywine
CROSSING
 717 BRANDYWINE ST, SE WASH, DC 20032
STUNNING CONDOS.
IRRESISTIBLE PRICES.
OPEN SAT/SUN
2-4 PM
 BRANDYWINECONDO.COM
 Sales by: **CORNERSTONE**

Kenyon Square.
Lobby door to
Columbia Heights
Metro escalator.
21 steps
 Condos directly above the Metro.
 Move in this summer.
KENYONSQUARE.COM
Sales & Design Center
 The Ellington, 1301 U Street NW, Suite 103
 11 am - 6 pm
 866.673.4427
 SALES BY DOMUS REALTY LLC

MOVE IN NOW:
matrix
...raising standards
in quality

 Open Sunday 12-3pm
 Lofts & Flats from the high \$400s
 Only six 1BR / 1.5BA lofts left!
202.462.0191 14th & P
 Sales by: **McWilliams Ballard**

CELEBRATE
 a Higher Standard...
 Thursday • May 17th • 6-8 pm
Rooftop Cocktail Reception.
 Tour Several Unique Residences.
 2100 11th Street, NW (Corner of 11th & V)
Immediate Delivery

TheBeauregard.com
 RSVP • theBeauregard@McWilliamsBallard.com
ROBERTSON
 DEVELOPMENT
 Sales by: **McWilliams Ballard Inc.** 202.549.2212

Kenyon Square.
Starbucks.
Scone. Columbia
Heights Metro.
2.3 min
 Condos with retail and restaurants directly
 above the Columbia Heights Metro station.
KENYONSQUARE.COM
Sales & Design Center
 The Ellington, 1301 U Street NW, Suite 103
 11 am - 6 pm
 866.673.4427
 SALES BY DOMUS REALTY LLC

Kenyon Square.
Elevator. Down
button. Columbia
Heights Metro.
46 sec
 Condos directly above the Metro.
 Final premium units: \$400s to \$700s.
KENYONSQUARE.COM
Sales & Design Center

PHASE II
NOW SELLING!
The Best Condo in
Columbia Heights
Is Fast Approaching
 Don't miss your chance to own a brand new, high-end two-bedroom home from just the \$400s - a value you won't find at any other new condominium in DC.
Stunning New Homes
 with available secure garage parking
 1 Bedrooms from about \$300K
 1 Bedrooms with Dens from the \$300s
 2 Bedrooms from the \$400s
 2-Level Penthouses from about \$500K
 Developed by: **McWilliams Ballard**

KALORAMA **OPEN 1:00-4:00**
GRAND OPENING!
'The Philadelphian'
 1816 Kalorama Road, N.W.
 \$189,000 -- \$449,000
 Hardhat Preview! Condo conversion of this elegant turn-of-the-century building has 20 new, well-designed, single-level, high-end, perfect used-a-former-time-to-prime-time two-bedroom condos. Designed with beautiful textured finishes, features include:
 • Wood-clad metal grilles and stainless steel mesh
 • Custom-made built-in bookshelves and closets
 • Kitchen with granite and stainless steel appliances
 • Water filtration unit in new kitchen
 • Hardwood floors in all bedrooms
 • Adjacent to the Metro, close to shopping, transportation, restaurants & the best of DC.
BONNIE ROBERTS-BURKE
 202-487-7653 202-857-4362
 www.hagner.com
RANDALL HAGNER

Figure 58. *Washington Post*, May 12, 2007, pG5.

The signifiers of urban development and gentrification are also employed in advertisements announcing the arrival of a “hip new DC restaurant” and “a new upscale restaurant” (Figure 59, 60).⁴⁴ The restaurant in question is The Heights, the fourth restaurant owned by restaurateur David Winer. The Heights opened on the ground floor of the Kenyon Square building. Winer’s previous three restaurants are located primarily in the Logan Circle neighborhood. Logan Circle began to slowly gentrify in the early 1980s and has since become a burgeoning upper-middle-class neighborhood home to numerous upscale condominiums, rehabbed homes, and high-end retail outposts like the stereo company Bang and Olufsen and the organic grocer Whole Foods. Additionally, the neighborhood is known as a gay enclave, with a number of gay male residents and multiple bars and shops catering to LGBTQ clientele.

One advertisement features a photograph of openly gay David Winer posing with Kenyon Square developer Chris Donatelli (Figure 60). Both wear pressed and stylish collared shirts and sport short, styled hair. These bodies can potentially be read as gay, especially if the reader is familiar with Logan Circle or David Winer.⁴⁵ The combination of these signifiers opens up the possibility of two readings. Firstly, the references to Logan Circle conjure the image of a neighborhood that has recently gentrified “successfully.” The advertisement sells an upscale future, allaying fears of its trajectory by showing that Winer and Co. have faith that Columbia Heights will soon become like Logan Circle. Furthermore, for those familiar with Logan Circle and/or Winer’s queerness, the advertisement links Columbia Heights to the popular narrative of the presence of gay residents and entrepreneurs as a precursor to “successful” gentrification.

These advertisements announce that Columbia Heights is a safe place for upper middle-class people. In a promotional video featured on Kenyon Square's sales web site, a current resident makes this explicit. "Kenyon Square," he exclaims, "really is the crown jewel of the Columbia Heights kind of revitalization or renaissance or whatever you want to call it." When the narrator of the video calls Kenyon Square a "luxurious community," the viewer can't help but transfer that vision to the surrounding street. A young white resident tells the camera that, "there is a lot of good people in the neighborhood."⁴⁶ While she says this in voiceover, we see images of a young, white family walking down the street with a stroller. This juxtaposition does more than reveal the neighborhood's presentation as an upper middle-class area. Here, the luxury community is also one where white people can roam free with their families.

Fighting against popular accounts of Columbia Heights as disinvested, dangerous, and not for white people, ads for luxury living, imported wine and beer, and micro-peels ' produce a "new," welcoming Columbia Heights void of any class or racial/ethnic conflict. In the world constructed in these advertisements, the plethora of Latina/o shops, restaurants, and groceries is absent. There are no health clinics or social service centers that serve hundreds of neighborhood residents daily. Working-class people of color are disappeared in the campaign to announce new development.

The logic of these ads is sound. It makes financial sense to target upper middle-class people when selling condominiums that range from "the \$400s to \$700s." However, this discursive production of a "new" Columbia Heights is troubling when viewed in the context of a changing neighborhood home to working-class people struggling to afford housing. These ads announce an upscaling that may very well work to repair the

tarnished image of Columbia Heights, but at what cost? “New” Columbia Heights is privileged over “old” Columbia Heights, a barely present snapshot of pathological, urban raciality. A modernist progress narrative has been intimated in the absences in the text: there was racial terror, there was emptiness, and now the ideal future is on its way. Not surprisingly, the ideal future looks awfully white and awfully expensive.

Kenyon Square.
Outdoor table
for two at hip new
DC restaurant.

15 steps

Condos directly above the Metro.
Final premium units: \$400s to \$700s.
KENYONSQUARE.COM

Sales & Design Center
The Ellington, 1301 U Street NW, Suite 103
11 am – 6 pm
866.673.4427
SALES BY DOMUS REALTY LLC

ONE FINAL CHANCE
THE WEST END'S FINEST CONDOMINIUM
A few stunning new homes remain at the
renowned Columbia Residences. Own
yours now and move in immediately.

- SPACIOUS KITCHEN FEATURING POGGENPOHL
CABINETS AND VIKING APPLIANCES
- FURNISHED MODEL NOW AVAILABLE

MOVE IN NOW FROM THE \$900'S
TO OVER \$2.6 MILLION

THE COLUMBIA
COLUMBIACONDOMINIUM.COM
202-955-5855
Brokers Welcomed
Sales by The Mayhood Company
Visit Our On-Site Sales Center Sat.-Wed. 11am-5pm

The Whitman
LIVING ART
What Whitman did with pen and ink,
we did with brick and mortar.

MOVE IN NOW - OPEN HOUSE SAT & SUN 12-3
1 BR/2 BA/Den and 2 BR/2.5 BA Condos
Sales at 910 M Street, NW
202.682.5955
thewhitman.com

tennessy lofts
OPEN HOUSE SATURDAY JUNE 16TH FROM 1-3PM
801 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004
One Bedroom/Den
Duplex Homes in the Livery Stable
961 sq. ft.
exposed brick
10-12 ft. ceilings
202.575.0522
www.tennessylofts.com

PHASE II NOW SELLING!

The Best Condo in Columbia Heights Is Fast Approaching

Don't miss your chance to own a brand new, high-end two-bedroom home from just the \$400s - a value you won't find at any other new condominium in DC.

Stunning New Homes
with available secure garage parking

- 1 Bedrooms from about \$300K
- 1 Bedrooms with Dens from the \$300s
- 2 Bedrooms from the \$400s
- 2-Level Penthouses from about \$500K

Developed by **allegro** Sales by **allegro**
202.722.7228
AllegroSpaces.com

Kenyon Square.
Starry night.
Rooftop terrace.
Summer parties.

360° view

High-rise condos with retail & restaurants
from an award-winning developer.
KENYONSQUARE.COM

Sales & Design Center
The Ellington, 1301 U Street NW, Suite 103
11 am – 6 pm
866.673.4427
SALES BY DOMUS REALTY LLC

Figure 59. *Washington Post*, June 9, 2007, pG4.

Great urban living in Columbia Heights just got even more flavorful with the news that Eat Well DC – the team behind Logan Tavern, Grillfish and Mercado Kitchen – will open a new upscale restaurant on the ground floor of the Kenyon Square Condominium.



Metro. Shopping. Restaurants. Entertainment.
Kenyon Square puts the best of DC right at your doorstep.

*Kenyon Square developer Chris Donatelli
and Eat Well DC's David Winer*



**COLUMBIA HEIGHTS WELCOMES
LOGAN TAVERN'S NEWEST RESTAURANT**

Kenyon Square

Luxury Condominiums atop
the Columbia Heights Metro

Final Release!

1BR to 2BRs w/ den
From the mid \$300s
Lofts also available

Call for incentives

888.887.6153

kenyonsquare.com

OPEN HOUSE
at The Ellington:

Daily 11 am – 5 pm

Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm

1301 U St, NW

Suite 618

Sales by **DOMUS**
realty

BROKER CO-OP 3%



Figure 60. *Washington Blade*, Sept. 29, 2006, p21.

The language of “revitalization” implies that the neighborhood had once died. Given the popular narrative that dysfunctional behavior among low-income residents caused urban decline, these residents are viewed as the cause of that death. This logic is also linked to discussions of longtime residents as people who do not care enough about trash, crime and their neighborhood generally. Revitalization is a rebirth, but it is also a process in which middle and upper-middle-class residents have a go at sustaining a neighborhood low-income residents let die. This narrative can erase longtime residents (i.e. if the neighborhood died than rhetorically those that lived there died too,) but it can also stigmatizes them as antithetical to neighborhood growth and health.

Marketing for the Park Triangle building is representative of real estate advertisements’ intense focus on new amenities offered within the dwellings themselves. Each ad publicizes the apartments’ stained concrete floors, granite countertops and stainless steel appliances (Figure 61).⁴⁷ These aesthetic choices reflect the use of expensive materials, constructing and targeting discerning renters interested in publicizing their class status or aspirations, if the high-priced rent was not enough of a distinction. As if this differentiation was not already clear, the ads promise “controlled access.” The separation that Park Triangle offers is two-fold. It provides security from the dangerous element on the street as well as a dwelling filled with artifacts of the new, upscale Columbia Heights.

Park Triangle is not the only building offering these luxury amenities. In fact, a large number of condominium conversions advertised throughout 1999-2009 announce spaces filled with stainless steel, concrete, and granite. Most of these ads were simple 4-5 line boxes of text. That this limited space was disproportionately devoted to bulleting

luxury shows that these amenities perform larger work than simply advertising a space. Especially in the years before mass construction of luxury condominium buildings, these ads use the shorthand of expensive building materials to invite middle- to upper-middle-class people to Columbia Heights. The advertisements assure them that accommodations have been made to make incoming upper-class residents feel at home.

Park Triangle
apartment lofts and flats

BRAND NEW

- * New Rental Apartments
- * One Month Free Rent
- * M-F 10 am-6 pm Sat. 10am-5pm. Sun. 12N-5pm

Contemporary Urban Lofts and Flats
Brand new luxury apartments in the heart of historic Columbia Heights

T: (866) 893-5644
1375 Kenyon Street NW Washington DC 20010
www.ParkTriangleApts.com

- One block to Columbia Heights Metro • Next to Tivoli Square and new Giant Food • Spacious apartments with stained concrete floors • Open kitchens with granite countertops & stainless steel appliances • Garage parking • Controlled access • State-of-the-art fitness center • Cats and dogs allowed

owned & developed by:
Triangle Ventures

managed by:
Paradigm
MANAGEMENT LP

Figure 61. *Washington Post*, March 26, 2006, pAL13.

The New History

Though the history of Columbia Heights is often covered over, it does appear in recent marketing campaigns. History, especially history in urban areas, raises value. The rise of historic preservation has catalyzed and influenced gentrification. Historic

buildings and the stories that they represent fit within a desirable middle-class aesthetic.⁴⁸ “New” Columbia Heights must be new enough to be largely rid of low-income residents of color, but an appropriated version of history can also entice middle and upper-middle-class people. This marketed history references the cultural and political achievements of past Columbia Heights residents while stripping that history of anything that would threaten upscale development.

The promotional material for Park Triangle the building also advertises the “rich, historic, & trend-happening neighborhood of Columbia Heights, historically known as ‘the city within a city.’”⁴⁹ This regard for Columbia Heights’s history has surfaced in the construction of the building: “To link Park Triangle with DC’s historic past, each unit type is named for now demolished buildings including some of the first apartment buildings in the city, theaters (with the exception, luckily, of the Tivoli) and institutional buildings.” The symbolic remembrance of historic buildings performs reverence while commodifying Columbia Height’s history as a racially diverse cultural hub. The building was itself made possible by a development process that snuffed out working-class cultural history in favor of upscale development like Park Triangle.

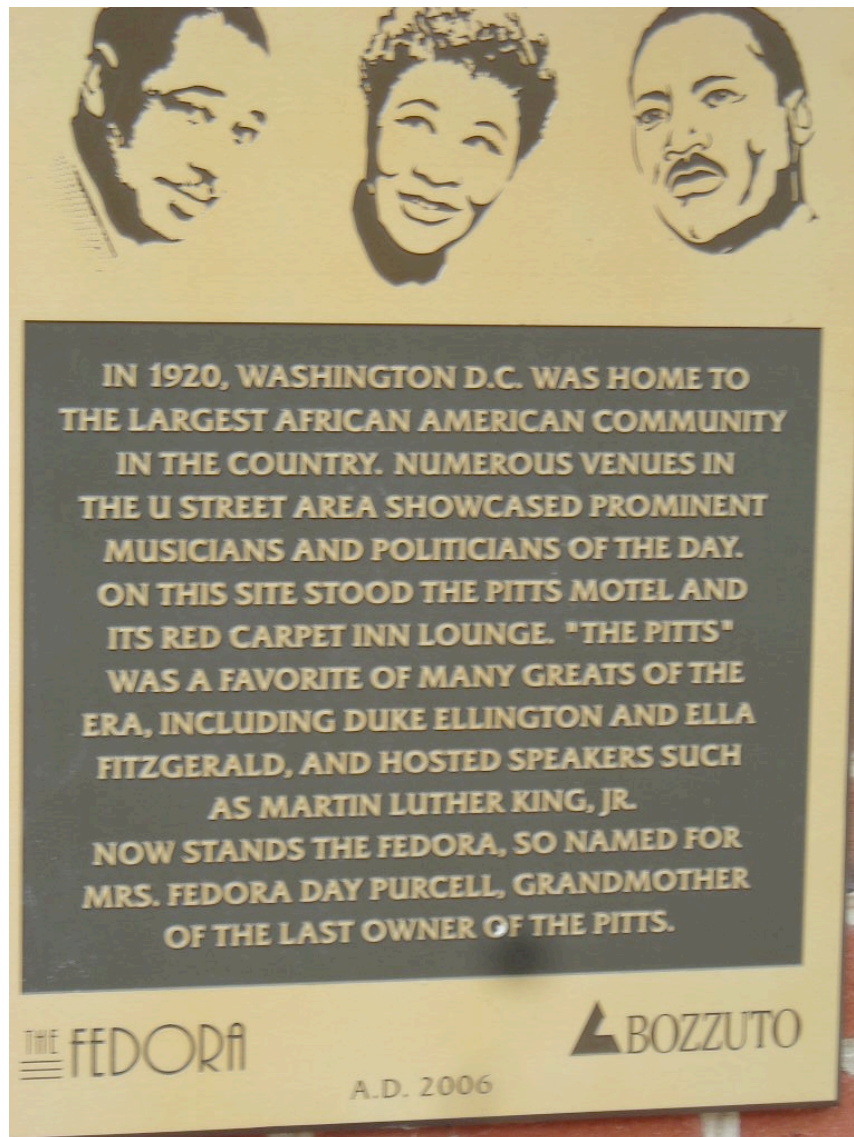
The Fedora condominium building takes a different approach to capitalizing multiculturalism. Outside the building, a gold and black-colored metal plaque reads:

In 1920, Washington D.C. was home to the largest African American Community in the country. Numerous venues in the U Street area showcased prominent musicians and politicians of the day. On this site stood the Pitts Motel and its Red Carpet Inn Lounge. “The Pitts” was a favorite of many greats of the era, including Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald, and hosted speakers such as Martin Luther King Jr. Now stands the Fedora, so named for Mrs. Fedora Day Purcell, grandmother of the last owner of the Pitts (Figure 62).

Above the script there are illustrations of Ellington, Fitzgerald, and King. At first glance, this official-looking plaque seems to have been erected by the National Register of Historic Places or, at the very least, the Cultural Tourism D.C. organization that has constructed several walking tours of historic neighborhoods in the city. However, the bottom of the plaque reveals that the benefactor of this historical record is in fact Bozutto, the builders of the Fedora condominium building. The plaque celebrates the building's ties to black history, but in the context of the marketplace, this history is used as a consumable selling point.

Newspaper advertisements for the Fedora locate the building in the "Upper U Street Area," a fictional neighborhood that disassociates its ties to Columbia Heights and plays up its proximity to an area that saw a boom in redevelopment and gentrification in the early 2000s.⁵⁰ Tying residences to a more upscale neighborhood despite their actual location is a time-tested real estate marketing technique, but this particular example is especially salient because of the kind of development with which it associates.

In 2004 and 2005, developers of the bordering U Street Corridor capitalized on its history of jazz and political organizing in the early and mid 20th century. It was dubbed "D.C.'s Harlem" by cultural tourism officials.⁵¹ It is now home to luxury condos and apartments such as "Langston Lofts" and "The Ellington," in addition to eateries such as "Busboys and Poets" (another Hughes reference), "Eatonville" (a reference to Zora Neale Hurston), and "Marvin" (after one-time D.C. resident Marvin Gaye). The marketing of the Fedora continues to appropriate this cultural history, refashioning rich moments in black life to turn a substantial profit by upscaling the neighborhood.



**Figure 62. Plaque on the exterior of the Fedora building.
(Photo by the author)**

Perhaps this can be seen as the neighborhood's return to its black bourgeoisie roots. The area remains a hot spot for black nightlife, but it is primarily upscale. In this 21st century Harlem, blacks can enjoy a piece of the high life and whites can engage with the cultural artifacts of early 20th "slumming" without the actual slums. The memory of Hurston, Gaye, King, Hughes and others who have spent time in the area gives the area

prestige. However, like most discussion of difference under neoliberalism, this history is celebrated without questioning inequality. Even Martin Luther King Jr. can help sell uneven development.

There are no specific guidelines as to what kind of history- that which denies racism or that which challenges it- can be used to reinforce racist and classist development. As long as these historical narratives are scrubbed clean of anything that would indict or threaten potential newcomers, they are potentially valuable. What does remain consistent is that the struggle for increased resources and rights that has been an integral part of Columbia Heights history has little commercial value and in fact threatens a development process that continues that neglect.

In addition to the appropriation of history, marketing materials for the Fedora also relied on the enforcement of class hierarchies in a series of advertisements appearing in 2006. An advertisement featured in the *Washington City Paper* shows a white thirty- or forty-something couple standing on a railed balcony, overlooking the Capitol dome at dusk (Figure 63).⁵² The man, dressed in a collar shirt, holds the woman close and looks into her eyes in a side profile. She wears a print summer dress, and caresses his shoulder while meeting his gaze. Bold text in the sky reads, “The place to rise above the politics.” A similar ad appears in the *Washington Blade*, identical except that the couple has been replaced by a similarly dressed black man wearing a white sweater (Figure 64).⁵³

**Final
Close-out!**

The place to rise
above the politics.



Enjoy breathtaking views of the city from the comforts of your rooftop terrace starting in the upper \$300s. But hurry, high-end living at this price won't last long. Just a few homes left!

The Fedora gives you great amenities!

- Homes ready for move-in this Summer/Fall
- 1 and 2-bedroom condos minutes from Adams Morgan
- Card key entry parking garage and building access
- Lighted rooftop terrace with magnificent city views
- From the upper \$300s

Homes available to tour now

1451 Belmont St., NW
Open daily 11am - 6pm

202-462-1969



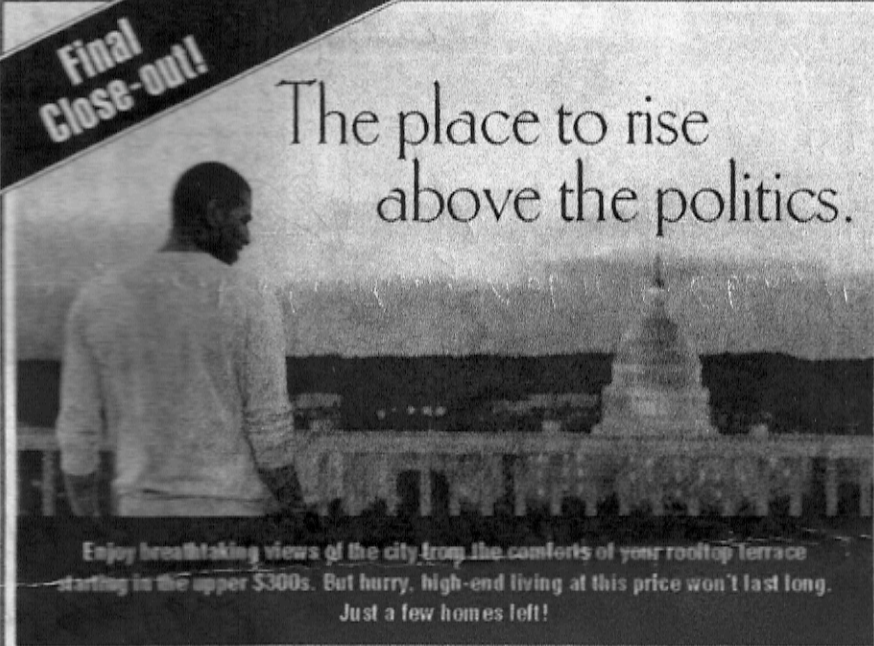
THE **FEDORA**

www.FedoraCondo.com

**BOZZUTO
HOMES**

We bring you home.

Figure 63. *Washington City Paper*, Sept. 8, 2006, p135.



Final Close-out!

The place to rise
above the politics.

Enjoy breathtaking views of the city from the comforts of your rooftop Terrace starting in the upper \$300s. But hurry, high-end living at this price won't last long. Just a few homes left!

- Homes ready for move-in this Summer/Fall
- 1 and 2-bedroom condos minutes from Adams Morgan
- Card key entry parking garage and building access
- Lighted rooftop terrace with magnificent city views
- From the upper \$300s

Homes available to tour now.
1451 Belmont St., NW
Open daily 11 am - 6 pm
202-462-1969

BOZZUTO HOMES

THE FEDORA
www.FedoraCondo.com

BOZZUTO HOMES
We bring you home.

Figure 64. *Washington Blade*, Oct. 27, 2006, p61.

The tagline plays off one of the building's selling points: the rooftop terrace with views of the Capitol. The implication is that the Fedora makes a perfect home for professionals in the government sector looking to escape the rat race of D.C. politics exemplified in neighborhoods like Capitol Hill. In addition to transcending politics, language such as "rising above" and "high-end living" celebrates a distance from those that cannot afford entry into the upper-class. Quite literally, these ads offer the ability to

rise above the street. It offers an escape from occupational politics as well as an escape from the politics of the street, including the tensions and conflicts over resources and space so common in socio-economically diverse and changing urban areas. There is a disconnect between these advertisements and the sentiments embodied in the celebrated black figures on the Fedora's plaque. Rising above the riff-raff is not something Dr. King would have necessarily advocated. This disconnect reveals that black history is useful only as a salable trope and referent rather than a connection to the struggle and shared history of black life in Washington D.C.

In both the Fedora and Park Triangle marketing, the limited embrace of history is a simulacric move in which new apartments become solemn reminders of the past. But in this process, the name is flattened (literally and symbolically) and reformed as a commodity- an amenity that constructs Columbia Heights as a creative class playground built on the foundations of a salable multicultural history. This is not the stuffy history of a historic Georgetown row house. While the embrace of Columbia Heights's history and its close ties to people of color may be a step towards some celebration of alternative histories, it is important to note how these histories are told. This is a history told in placards amidst a redevelopment that threatens to displace the descendants of these cultural worlds. The representation of race, class, and politics is detached from actual people of color. Because actual low-income residents of color are associated with crime, dirt, and unpleasantness they threaten upscale development. These narratives allow history to circulate in safer and more profitable ways.

The Politics of Transition

With this complex language of new and old, diverse and upscale, it is important to examine how incoming respondents reconcile these juxtapositions. How do residents new to Columbia Heights conceptualize its past, present, and ideal future? The answer partially lies in the language used to describe the changing neighborhood.

Beth compares her first impressions of Columbia Heights with her experience living in Chicago telling me, “when I was gone for five years I lived in Chicago in all urban areas, but not nearly as transitional as this. That area had already sort of transitioned in a way this one hadn’t.” Later on in our interview, Shaunna piggybacks on this idea of “transition,” relaying her and her husband’s search for their first house:

It was going to be our first house to buy and, you know, we just couldn’t give up the urban lifestyle. We looked in Silver Spring [a suburb of D.C. in Maryland], we looked at a lot of neighborhoods in D.C. as well. And either way they were a little bit *too* up and coming... still not... emphasis on coming, not up. Columbia Heights is definitely up and coming, but it was kind of the devil you know.

Beth and Shaunna’s focus on transition and the “up and coming” factor of Columbia Heights, reveals an investment in a future different from the neighborhood’s past and present. What is on the other side of transition? What is “coming”? The future seems to be tied to the proliferation of new businesses such as Target, the new branch of the pricey Washington Sports Club franchise and a series of higher-end restaurants and bars.

For Kevin, it also seems to reference a future where crime will decrease. He predicts that, “the crime and so forth... will diminish over time- it will never go away, but it will diminish over time.” Some incoming residents seem to be biding their time, waiting for this transition to occur before feeling truly at home. They are looking toward the future.

Theorist Lee Edelman articulates how the future as a rhetorical concept works to sustain (and often worsen) hierarchies embedded in the social order. Citing the potential for queers to use their location outside of normalcy to disrupt “every notion of the general good,” Edelman calls for a sustained critique of the future and the inequitable symbolic order it props up.⁵⁴ As homebuyers and incoming residents arriving amidst redevelopment, this focus on transition and an imagined future is in line with the ethos of speculation that often fuels development and gentrification. Speculation appraises a neighborhood as what it *could* be, in this case, what it could be for incoming middle- and upper-class residents.

Redevelopment in the age of public monies funneled into private, market-rate development relies on the potential of these projects’ successes. “Success” is measured by high revenue, a category that excludes and is threatened by working class people of color, homeless residents, or otherwise deviant social groupings. Applied to the violence of speculation, Edelman’s queer critique of futurity offers innovative ways to link seemingly neutral descriptions of the “new” with a revalidation of the neoliberal social order and its accompanying hierarchies of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and economic class.

Respondents did not explicitly express the desire for the neighborhood to become an upper-middle-class enclave. In fact, many argued against that potential outcome. However, the implicit future conjured in language like “transitional” and “up and coming” figures an unsaid but implied future that privileges residents like themselves. What is up and coming? To what will the neighborhood transition? Most likely, it will transition into a neighborhood with far fewer low-income people, criminal and otherwise.

Respondents' language must be contextualized with the language used in the dominant maps of Columbia Heights drawn by developers. In those narratives, what is "coming up" is a landscape devoid of racialized poverty. These comments undercut an investment in socio-economic diversity, constructing a narrative of progression filled with more vigilant policing and the rise of creative class-friendly retail and housing. When respondents use the language of transition, they plug into the celebratory way many people talk about gentrification.⁵⁵ In doing so, they illustrate the influence marketing and other sites of discursive production have on residents. Despite the sometimes contradictory things incoming respondents told me, they often reinforced the language of developers.

Talking about a future free of low-income residents, often through implicit rhetorical moves, may not immediately displace people. It does, however, sustain the logic of gentrification. It normalizes segregation and neglect and creates a landscape in which the people with the most power and capital welcome development that displaces low-income people. As with all the discourse discussed in this dissertation, the language of transition encourages, catalyzes, and rationalizes material changes that threaten particular residents.

The temporal orientation towards the future also elides the history of Columbia Heights. Despite the disinvestment, depopulation, and crime that plagued the neighborhood for the decades following the civil uprising of 1968, Columbia Heights remained an active and close-knit neighborhood. I did not ask respondents specifically about local history, but I did ask them to describe the neighborhood and what drew them to it. Some respondents talked about the history of Columbia Heights, acknowledging its

long role as a bustling ethnic and racial enclave. Zoe says, “maybe in the past Columbia Heights was more African-American, but I feel like there’s a rising Hispanic, Latino population in the neighborhood.” Kevin echoes Zoe’s read on the neighborhood’s demographic history, opining, “I think that we still have a vibrant community of both ethnic origins that have co-existed and sort of survived here.”

Sarah acknowledges the ethnic and racial roots of the neighborhood, but also defined the neighborhood by its recent redevelopment. “It was just all empty abandoned warehouse kind of buildings,” she remembers. “There was nothing there. So sometimes I think it’s hilarious that we’re living in this neighborhood that I didn’t want to walk in by myself for three blocks.” Sarah’s comments are line with the distorted and erased history that developers have forwarded in the marketing of Columbia Heights. Any potential guilt for displacing people is quickly absolved if the neighborhood is mapped as empty.

The narrative of the empty city exists alongside other narratives such as the narrative of the richly historic Columbia Heights or of the neighborhood that low-income residents squandered. Sometimes these narratives line up. For instance, conceptualizing the city as being ruined by low-income residents who did not care about their communities matches with narratives of the empty city. It was killed, it was lifeless, and then people began moving back.

Sometimes narratives of Columbia Heights are seemingly contradictory, as with the narrative of the empty city and the narrative of Columbia Heights’ valuable multicultural history. How can it have been an empty city and yet have such history? Typically, the empty city and vibrant history narrative strands are reconciled because only specific histories are told. The time when uprisings and disinvestment struck the

neighborhood is covered over and replaced with a narrative that constructs the city as empty during those years. The thread that draws all three narratives together is that all can be used to forward upscale development. All erase the agency of low-income residents and place incoming gentrifiers as the prioritized group.

Mary also conceptualizes the neighborhood in terms of recent changes. She sees Columbia Heights as a nascent community: “it feels like a neighborhood that, and I don’t mean to describe it by what it is not, but it’s not established yet. If you think about the Capitol Hill neighborhood, that’s a well-established, settled neighborhood. There’s a lot of shared history involved. This neighborhood doesn’t feel like that. It feels like it is still kind of finding its way.” Her desire to move to Columbia Heights was fueled by its affordability, but she also likes “the adventure of being sort of the first in.” The crime in the neighborhood was not a major deciding factor and Mary noted that she didn’t bother to check crime statistics, “figuring I was moving into a sort of frontier neighborhood [so] there would be that issue.”

Throughout our conversation, Mary expresses a desire to build community in Columbia Heights across racial, ethnic, and class lines. Yet her experience as the “first in” elides the history of Columbia Heights as an active and populated neighborhood. Her comments echo Richard Florida’s vision of an empty city waiting to be repopulated by the creative class. Geographer Neil Smith’s analysis of the language of gentrification is also helpful in articulating the politics behind the erasure of history:

frontier imagery is neither merely decorative nor innocent, but carries considerable ideological weight. Insofar as gentrification affects working-class communities, displaces poor households, and converts whole neighborhoods into bourgeois enclaves, the frontier ideology rationalizes social differentiation and exclusion as natural, inevitable. The poor and

working class are all too easily defined as “uncivil,” on the wrong side of a heroic dividing line, as savages and communists.⁵⁶

Framing Columbia Heights as the frontier privileges newcomers and defines them as the civilizing agents of change. In Mary’s case this change involves an integrated, coalitional relationship between the neighborhood’s demographically diverse residents. Though this present and future coalition is vital, acknowledgement of history, agency, and power is a vital component of the integrated future Mary desires. The absences in these narratives of history, illustrate how temporal conceptions of space potentially threaten racial, ethnic, and class diversity in the neighborhood.

Perceptions of and interaction in Columbia Heights are often ordered along lines of resources. I define resources broadly, encompassing both the amenities featured in real estate marketing and general city resources such as police presence and infrastructural funding for things like road repair and trash collection. Newcomers’ discussion of resources further highlights how interactions between the diverse population of the neighborhood are often structured along lines of race, ethnicity, class, and even length of residence. All the respondents were invested in the long-term success of Columbia Heights. Though the visions for a successful Columbia Heights varied, all respondents wanted Columbia Heights to receive more productive attention from public and private entities. This desire partially reinforces the consumer ethos promoted by marketing campaigns. As targeted buyer, incoming residents want to get what they have paid for. Though longtime residents have struggled for city services for decades, newcomers conceptualize themselves as a priority.

Another variable in this conversation is newcomers’ intent to stay in the neighborhood. Though some respondents plan to remain in Columbia Heights in the

foreseeable future, many of the people I spoke with will leave Columbia Heights and the city within the next five years. Washington D.C. presents a unique case study in urban development, as many residents are here temporarily for school, government work, or short-term employment in the hundreds of non-profit and private sector corporations headquartered here. This ethnography complicates narratives of neighborhood development in which high community involvement is correlated with a resident owning property in the neighborhood and/or planning to stay long term. Though concerns of owners, renters, temporary residents, and long-term residents vary, I found that all were actively engaged in discussions about the neighborhood. Many attend neighborhood planning meetings, are active on listservs, or are linked to social service organizations based in the area.

I asked respondents about the relationship Washington, D.C. city government had with Columbia Heights. Many voice frustration with the lack of attention Columbia Heights receives, offering a possible locus of coalition between all residents of Columbia Heights. “I see it as... we are a pain in [the city’s] ass, frankly,” Mary told me. “You know, they’re always up here for some violent crime and so I feel as through we get their attention when we stomp our feet loud enough.... I had to call a couple times about rats, and it’s just like come on! People in Dupont Circle don’t live like this.”

Mary was not the only respondent who viewed the city’s neglect along lines of wealth (Dupont Circle is considered an upscale neighborhood in the city.) Rowan’s perception of the relationship between the city and the neighborhood focused on the disparity of police involvement:

I remember in November, right around Thanksgiving break, I was reading the *Post* and I guess there was this strain of robberies out by like

Cleveland Park and Georgetown. I just loved it because... one of the people who was robbed, in the police record, was... “he was robbed of his wallet, cell phone, and Burberry scarf”.... You just get the feeling that there’s a little bit more of a concentrated and faster response to the man and his Burberry scarf and the other people in the area who got robbed, because they caught the suspects pretty quickly, compared to here.

Both Mary and Rowan’s comments compare the (lack of) municipal support Columbia Heights receives with the resources allocated to two of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. Their comments define this favoritism along lines of class and to a lesser extent race. In other words, the diverse demographics vital to selling the neighborhood often lead to a neglect not seen in wealthier and whiter areas in the city. These frustrations could potentially serve as a point of coalition building in Columbia Heights, bridging newcomers’ recent realizations and longtime residents’ decades-long struggle for funds and support for a long-disinvested neighborhood.

The solutions to this common frustration, however, sometimes privileged newcomers. Rowan explained that, “in Columbia Heights you have this mix of people who have come from the suburbs and quote un-quote ‘safer’ areas, who are pressing on the local government structures going ‘look, we want to keep our neighborhood safe. We want to keep it up and coming.’” For Rowan, middle- to upper-middle-class newcomers advocate for resources more vocally. Shaunna expresses a similar opinion, telling me,

often people who are gentrifying won’t stand for crime and things that I think people in the neighborhood didn’t want either, but has a hard time getting the attention of the police because, let’s face it when you’re poor you don’t have a good, strong voice.... We know poor people are disenfranchised. It’s good in that it brings a voice to a neighborhood that hasn’t been able to get that.

Shaunna also privileges the effectiveness of newcomers, but views that effectiveness as a consequence of systemic marginalization of working-class, longtime residents. Though

mobilizing class privilege could prove to be a productive strategy in getting more resources, it is in danger of contributing to the myth that residents of disinvested neighborhoods lack the motivation to fight for much needed city services.⁵⁷ In reality, as seen in chapter two, longtime residents have fought hard for city resources. However, in the narrative of revitalized Columbia Heights, the city's neglect is seen as longtime residents' inability to advocate for themselves. Similarly, the narrative also constructs newcomers as more worthy of resources and more adept at receiving them.⁵⁸

Resources in a neighborhood are not limited to police and municipal services. As evidenced by the real estate advertisements analyzed, the commercial amenities in a neighborhood are a vital component to residents' conceptualization of that neighborhood. Respondents discussed the commercial amenities they did or did not frequent in Columbia Heights at length. This everyday experience on the streets- where to walk, where to shop, where to eat- illustrates the mechanics of relationships between diverse populations in Columbia Heights.

Some respondents partook in a wide range of businesses in the neighborhood, frequenting more upscale restaurants like The Heights in addition to more inexpensive, Latina/o run businesses such as the Pan Am grocer. Sarah says, "we don't have any qualms going out and about in the neighborhood." She qualifies her comment later telling me, "we don't really go to the more Latino places. Like, we don't go to the Salvadorian disco, because that just always looks foreboding. But we love to go to Pan Am for groceries. That produce is so cheap." When she described how Columbia Heights could improve, she suggested more businesses like the Wonderland bar and the Derby bar, two bars popular with new, white residents. "I think that you need to have something like

those,” she says. “Maybe some of the populations that are going to go to those kinds of places, maybe a couple more of those would be nice.”

Sarah’s comments illustrate the segmentation of amenities. In her experience, Columbia Heights is home to a variety of businesses, some which cater to the whole population of the neighborhood and others, like the Salvadoran disco and Wonderland, that cater to specific residents. This mapping of the landscape, coupled with ads selling more upscale amenities, raises a question: who are these new amenities for?

Though businesses catering to the large Latina/o population of Columbia Heights are valued by non-Latina/o incoming residents, they are not the marquee amenities displayed in the real estate advertisements for the “new” Columbia Heights. Like the limited access to luxury condominiums, all amenities are not for all residents. The segmentation of amenities reveals the diversity of neighborhood businesses, but it also serves as another locus where racial, ethnic, and class diversity is differently valued in the discourse of marketing and in the everyday experiences of incoming residents.

Conclusion: From Diversity to Coalition?

Despite the tension, some respondents actively and passionately theorized how to parlay demographic diversity into an integrated and coalitional neighborhood. Language presents one glaring barrier to communication between groups. All of the respondents discussed in this chapter were native English speakers who were not fluent in any other languages. In a neighborhood with a large Spanish-speaking population, in addition to non-English speaking African and Southeast Asian populations, interaction between

strangers on the street and in businesses can be challenging if the language barrier does not prevent people from trying to converse in the first place.

Mary expresses frustration that these obstacles hindered opportunities to help people in the neighborhood. She suggests things such as fundraising events and pot-luck exchanges to aid neighbors in need. She tells me that finding more ways to facilitate communication is integral to building camaraderie in a demographically diverse area. She continues, saying,

I totally get that a lot of residents don't have internet access. They all have cell phones. Maybe we could set up a cell phone network. But at least just send... blast out like 'meeting here', whatever it is. I don't know how you get news out in a neighborhood, particularly in a neighborhood as diverse as this one. But I wish there were a way that I knew more of what was going on.

As a local pastor involved in social service programs, Luke also asserts that communication was a vital first step. He contends that, "we could do a better job addressing some of the social issues simply by making sure that information was there."

Ryan's suggests a literal street-level intervention:

the simplest, easiest thing, honest to god, is a good block party. Because if you want those different types of people to mix together, sure, you're not going to make it happen with a snap of your finger. But, something like that is something I feel like a lot of different types of people could go to at least see each other in a more relaxed setting than just walking down the street and passing each other everyday. I guess they tried that with Columbia Heights Day, but that was a rather limited set of people.... It tended to be all white people, which isn't representative of the neighborhood really.

Ryan's reference to the mostly white-attended Columbia Heights Day illustrates how attempts at community building can often fail. Echoing his earlier statement about segregation, Ryan's suggestion implores the neighborhood to plan a social event with input from diverse residents that would be a comfortable leisure space for all residents.

Often times, however, overcoming the context of racialized, class tension in a rapidly changing neighborhood is harder than, as Ryan says, snapping one's fingers.

Despite Mary and Ryan's investment in communicating with and aiding low-income residents, their suggestions do not necessarily disrupt the class hierarchy that orders the neighborhood. Charity is built around the idea that those benefitting from the system should give back. It is not built around the idea that the philanthropist should examine and alter the inequitable structures that provide people with the wealth they "give back." Mary is not splitting the profit she will receive on her rehabbed property. Not doing so does not preclude her from fighting inequality, but charity work does not wholly counteract an individuals actions.

But substantive engagement between groups does not have to be prolonged and deeply intimate to be successful in building community trust. Though the potential of a pot-luck should not be overstated, it does offer a chance to talk with different residents and break the walls of segregation the ideology of recent real estate marketing builds up.

As Jane Jacobs famously argued in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, contact- the casual interaction between city-dwellers that contributes to mutual trust and a perception of safety- is often ephemeral.⁵⁹ Often, a simple passing nod on the street or brief conversation with a neighbor can contribute to mutual respect. Most of the respondents noted that, though they did not substantively know their neighbors, they liked the brief conversations and passing smiles between them. Mary, Luke, and Kevin's suggestions for more community interaction should also be tempered by the fact that anonymity is built into the nature of densely populated urban environments.

The framing lens of contact opens up the potential for these everyday interactions to foster inter-race and inter-class understanding.⁶⁰ For instance, Shaunna's interactions with the neighbors that stereotype local black men show moments when someone can intervene and shut down a racist line of thought. This does not immediately change the investment patterns in the neighborhood, but it at least works against the racism and classism that is used to justify the simultaneous neglect and policing of longtime residents. These interactions will not erase the material consequences of uneven development, but just as tension is solidified through ephemeral interactions like throwing rocks or cutting people off, convivial interactions may aid in building consciousness of the context of development and how it affects various residents.

Compared to the experiences longtime residents reported in the previous chapter, newcomers interacted with their neighbors far less. Part of this is most likely because newcomers are more likely to be young renters who may not feel comfortable crossing the inter-generational divide to talk to longtime residents. Part of it, though, is that newcomers perceive they are arriving in a very different Columbia Heights. Because of recent marketing campaigns and other talk in blogs and feature stories, Columbia Heights is no longer the "frontier," it is a place ripe for middle and upper-middle class young people's patronage. If a neighborhood is part of "your world" than the impetus to make connections with longtime residents is lessened.

In order to activate the potential of contact, one must actually make contact. Mary and Ryan understood the need to connect, especially given the decreased connections that now characterize Columbia Heights. Despite the fact that a conversation is not going to reverse gentrification, what would Ryan's proposed block party look like? It would have

a different vibe than Columbia Heights Day, which in some ways was an event designed by newcomers to assert their belonging rather than to create interaction. It would be a day in which different people of different social locations would come together and talk, perhaps temporarily disrupting relations of power in the process.

Maybe those interactions would reinscribe relations of power. There is no guarantee that contact will yield teachable moments. Not interacting, though, by definition almost always prevents coalition. Perhaps this lower-pressure environment would lead to a candid discussion about gentrification or about joining together to help cleaning up a park frequented by Latina/o residents. It would be a space in which people could express their needs and where those who have been sold the new map of Columbia Heights could realize that a far different topography exists on the ground.

Notes

¹ *Washington City Paper*, “Kenyon Square, Highland Park,” Advertisement, Sept. 15, 2006, 39.

² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002 (1984)), 96.

³ Jane Ward, *Respectably Queer* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 48.

⁴ Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 3.

⁵ As seen later in this chapter, this history does not necessarily have to be de-fanged. While the depoliticized stories of jazz and vacation homes sell the neighborhood, so to do the histories of civil rights and radicalism. In the latter case, though, this narrative is only useful if it does not implicate incoming residents in the systems that local activists were fighting.

⁶ Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image” in *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzeoff (New York: Routledge, 1998), 70-73.

⁷ Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (New York: Harper, 1987 (1976)), 84.

⁸ Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Marion Boyars, 2002 (1978)), 47.

⁹ Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side*, ix.

¹⁰ Arlene Davila, *Barrio Dreams*, 183.

¹¹ A monthly, stratified random sampling technique is commonly used in Journalism and Mass Communications. All of the periodicals were either published weekly or had a significantly larger and more prominent real estate section on a particular day as was the case for the *Washington Post*. I coded all the weeks in a month and then, using a random number table generator, chose one date for each month to get a constructed year. In short, I examined 12 issues per year. For certain years- 1999 (the year the Metro Rail station opened,) 2005, and 2006 (years in which newly constructed apartments were beginning to sell and the DC-USA mall was fast approaching)- I looked through every other week instead of a randomly selected issue each month. For more on the significance of analysis based on random sampling see Daniel Riffe, Stephen Lacy, and Kay Robinson, “Sample Size in Content Analysis of Weekly Newspapers,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (Summer 1995): 336-45.

¹² Association for Alternative Newsweeklies, *Washington City Paper*, <http://aan.org/alternative/Aan/ViewCompany?oid=oid%3A95> (accessed 3/1/11);

Washington Post Media, *Demographic Profile*,
<http://www.washingtonpostads.com/adsite/why/media/reach/profile/page1318.html>
(accessed 3/1/11); Verified Audit Circulation, *The Washington Blade*,
<http://www.verifiedaudit.com/masthead.php?pid=4403&mid=000> (accessed 3/1/11).

¹³ Nicholas Mirzoeff, "What Is Visual Culture?" in *The Visual Culture Reader*, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff (New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.

¹⁴ Of course, ethnography can never truly "capture" an objective interaction, but inquiring about subjective experience is often productive of meaning.

¹⁵ Because of the subjectivity involved in self-identifying one's own class status, I intentionally did not ask respondents how they conceptualized their class, instead letting the respondents define their social location in the course of a conversation without prompting.

¹⁶ Self reported to DC Condo Prices, www.DCCondPrices.com (accessed 3/1/11).

¹⁷ Information gathered from Park Triangle leasing office.

¹⁸ Information gathered from Kenyon Square sales office.

¹⁹ Lydia DePillis, "High Stakes at Highland Park: Donatelli Wants to Build More Apartments, but La Casa Might Hold Him Back," *The Washington City Paper*, Oct. 1, 2010, <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2010/10/01/high-stakes-at-highland-park-donatelli-wants-to-build-more-apartments-but-la-casa-might-hold-him-back/> (accessed 3/1/11).

²⁰ *Washington Post*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, March 25, 2006, G6; *Washington Post*, "Park Triangle," Advertisement, March 26, 2006, AL13; *Washington City Paper*, "The Fedora," Advertisement, February 10, 2006, 11.

²¹ *Washington Post*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, April 22, 2006, G7.

²² *Washington Post*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, August 26, 2006, G4; *Washington City Paper*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, Sept. 22, 2007, 12.

²³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

²⁴ *Washington Blade*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, May 19, 2006, 84; *Washington Blade*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, Sept. 15, 2006, 41.

²⁵ *Washington Blade*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, Nov 11, 2006, 73.

²⁶ Manuel Castells, "Cultural Identity, Sexual Liberation and Urban Structure: The Gay Community in San Francisco" in *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory*. Manuel Castells and Ida Susser, eds. (Boston: Balckwell, 2002); *Will and Grace*, "East Side Story," episode 6.11, first broadcast March 11, 2004 by NBC, directed by James

Burrows; "Flip Flop," episode 6.15, first broadcast Feb. 26, 2004 by NBC, directed by James Burrows; "The Newlydreads," episode 7.06. First broadcast Oct. 21, 2004 by NBC, directed by James Burrows.

²⁷ Domus Realty, *Highland Park*, <http://www.highlandparkdc.com/> (accessed 3/1/10).

²⁸ *Washington Post*, "Highland Park," Advertisement, March 25, 2006, G6.

²⁹ Arlene Davila, *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 110.

³⁰ Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 90.

³¹ Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block*.

³² *Washington Post*, "Park Triangle," Advertisement, August 26, 2006, AL12.

³³ *Washington City Paper*, "Park Triangle," Advertisement, Sept. 1, 2006, 13.

³⁴ *Washington Post*, "Park Triangle," Advertisement, July 22, 2006, AL12.

³⁵ *Washington Post*, "Park Triangle," Advertisement, Sept. 23, 2006, AL12.

³⁶ For examples see *Clockers*, directed by Spike Lee (40 Acres and Mule Filmworks, 1995); *Boyz n the Hood*, directed by John Singleton (Columbia Pictures, 1991).

³⁷ Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 88.

³⁸ I use violence here as a broad descriptor for anything from alienation to property theft to physical violence. David and the other respondents did not specify what infractions they feared when discussing "safety." I examine and unpack the construction of "safety" and "criminality" in chapters four and five.

³⁹ Gabriella Gahlia Modan, *Turf Wars*, 137-169.

⁴⁰ Though Kevin does not define the demographics of this creative class, the designation most likely refers to mostly young, middle-class artists or professionals like him.

⁴¹ *Washington Post*, "Kenyon Square," Advertisement, May 12, 2007, G5.

⁴² *Washington City Paper*, "Kenyon Square," Advertisement, April, 13, 2007, 53.

⁴³ The scone's anglicized roots and its role as a pop cultural shorthand for uppity British customs also potentially makes it a white snack.

⁴⁴ *Washington City Paper*, “Kenyon Square,” Advertisement, June 6, 2001, G4; *DC*, “Kenyon Square,” Advertisement, Sept. 2007; *Washington City Paper*, “Kenyon Square,” Advertisement, Sept., 1, 2006, 31; *Washington Blade*, “Kenyon Square,” Advertisement, Sept. 29, 2006, 21.

⁴⁵ After researching his public life, I am not able to discern how Chris Donetelli publicly defines his sexuality.

⁴⁶ Domus Realty, *Kenyon Square*, <http://www.kenyonsquare.com/> (accessed 3/1/10).

⁴⁷ *Washington Post*, “Park Triangle,” Advertisement, March 26, 2006, AL13.

⁴⁸ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 116.

⁴⁹ Triangle Ventures, *Park Triangle*, www.parktriangleapts.com/location (accessed 3/1/10).

⁵⁰ *Washington Post*, “The Fedora,” Advertisement, March 6, 2004, 61.

⁵¹ This moniker did not necessarily originate with D.C. Cultural Tourism, but it has been revived and circulated by them in recent years.

⁵² *Washington City Paper*, “The Fedora,” Advertisement, Sept. 8, 2006, 135.

⁵³ *Washington Blade*, “The Fedora,” Advertisement, Oct. 27, 2006, 61. The use of black and, in this case, presumably queer bodies creates another layer of commodified race. For white readers, the image taps into a dominant trope of fetishized black bodies from Robert Mapplethorpe to Madonna. However, the image also potentially appeals to black readers. This is not to say that the sexualization of blackness for white audiences is something specific to queer culture, as evidenced by bell hooks and others work. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1999). For a discussion on fetishized black bodies in a queer context among both white and black viewers see Jose Estaban Munoz’s discussion of Robert Mapplethorpe. He argues that images can alternately reinscribe racism while also providing “disidentificatory pleasure” that acknowledges the racism within the image but does not wholly dismiss the image because of it. Jose Estaban Munoz, *Disidentification: Queer of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 70.

⁵⁴ Edelman argues that, “by figuring a refusal of the coercive belief in the paramount value of futurity... the queer dispossesses the social order of the ground on which it rests: a faith in the consistent reality of the social- and by extension, of the social subject”. This investment in the inequitable social order can also be grafted onto another future-focused process in regards to space: real estate speculation. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 6.

⁵⁵As Tom Slater argues, discussions about gentrification are increasingly celebrations of renaissance that erase inequality. Tom Slater, "The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research," 573-590.

⁵⁶ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 17.

⁵⁷ This presumed ineffectiveness shares similarities with classic arguments about slum pathology such as Broken Window Theory, popularized by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. This tradition of pathology is countered by examinations of the vibrant oppositional knowledge production among urban people of color in works such as Robin D.G. Kelley's *Race Rebels*. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," 29-38; Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁵⁸ Although comments like Rowan's show that newcomers have not gotten resources, these sentiments rely on a personal responsibility philosophy. If someone wants resources, the logic goes, they will work for them and receive them. What this trajectory obscures is all of the support developers and the city have given middle and upper-middle-class newcomers and all of the neglect and discrimination they have inflicted on low-income residents.

⁵⁹ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 56.

⁶⁰ Though his primary focus is on sexual relationships in Times Square, Samuel Delaney has argued more explicitly that contact is an integral part of creating more integrated and socially just urban areas. Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, 127.

CHAPTER FOUR VIGNETTE

I came in from a happy hour with a few friends from school. I was indeed happy. It was early May and I was reveling in the weather, in the end of the school year, and the fact that my research had been going so well. In the past few weeks, plenty of interested neighbors had responded positively to my interview requests. My first request for respondents for longtime residents of Columbia Heights had generated good buzz and already my more recent post requesting LGB residents had already netted half a dozen responses. What's more, a lot of the interested neighbors were longtime residents of color. Initially, I had been concerned about connecting with them and gaining their trust, given my status as a young, white, upwardly mobile, queer newcomer. It was one of those evenings where I could see my completed research project on the horizon, free of the wavy heat lines of insufficient archives and writer's block.

Then I checked my inbox. There was an email from one of the older, longtime African American respondents who had contacted me saying that she and a few of her friends and family were enthusiastic about being interviewed. Now, she had seen my follow up request for LGB residents and was concerned:

So if this is the same research you are doing about persons living in CH for more than 10 years, I am not the one, nor is my brother, nor are all the other persons I mentioned, etc., etc. You see, we are the true CH residents, the LGBQs are transplants. Don't have anything good or bad to say but the neighborhood has changed. Whether it is for better or worse -- the verdict is still out.

In that moment, my capability for understanding complex issues of identity, space, and power shut down. I had just been rendered inauthentic. Not as a "true" Columbia Heights resident. That label I've never tried to own. I've never used loyalty as some sort of imperial magic trick in which neighborhood pride obscures gentrification. What stung

was that her email seemed to shut down the possibility of queer people ever being real, accepted, at home.

At first I didn't know why I was so hurt by her response. I have yet to be offended when someone disparages the white newcomers of Columbia Heights. I try to own my privilege and my place near or on the wrong side of the gentrification wars. My racial identity can take the hit, I think, because this critique is largely self-imposed and is relatively novel. It has not plagued me like a storm cloud hanging over my limp wrist up at Little League bat, or in awkward conversations with powerful men who bond over blondes and baseball.

It took me a few hours to recover, but I knew that this opinion deserved to be a part of the project. In fact, it was a rare example of outright (or as outright as a carefully worded email could be) hostility not cloaked in the politeness generated from face to face interactions. I contacted her again:

If you are willing, I would love to get your opinion about the neighborhood, as I truly believe that long-time residents are the most important part of the equation. Interestingly, I have had the opportunity to interview gay and lesbian residents who have grown up here and have lived in Columbia Heights since the 1960s.

I wanted to be professional and I wanted to wear my anti-gentrification politics on my sleeve. I also, however, could not resist complicating her reductive equation that drew sexuality strictly along racial lines. Her follow up email took up the gauntlet my hurt had laid down,

As to the Gays and Lesbians growing up here since the 1960s, I probably know who they are (or maybe not) but they have always been knowledgeable where they are in their life and did not try to force their lifestyle upon anyone else nor have they publicly shown their affections in public. I am a very happily married heterosexual but I still do not grab-ass with my husband in the street nor do I try to force my tongue down his throat in front of everyone to see. And yes, I have observed this behavior more than I would like to have seen in the neighborhood

where I grew up. That is my issue; be who you want to be, (BTW we all have to be responsible to God (my belief) in the final hour; not putting my lifestyle higher than another), but just respect my space in public.

So now, in addition to being inauthentic, I was a pervert writhing around in the waiting room of damnation. It stung less, though because deep down I knew why she was upset and I agreed with her.

My neighbor was certainly expressing an offensive homonegative hostility, but she was also using white LGBTQ residents as a projection of a larger, more amorphous enemy. Grab-assing in public, swooping in as transplants: these actions at their core were about a disrespect for longtime residents' space.

I'm sure that if I had been on a park bench with a man, shoving my tongue down his throat, that she and others would privately or publicly shame me. But the big wet kiss of displacement lingers on all our mouths. From that moment on I knew that I could never scrub identity-based violence clean to core fibers of hate and privilege. My swish was tied up in the hurt, frustration, and sadness of an army of folks struggling to stay afloat in the wreckage of the welfare state.

I got back to her through gritted teeth and asked if we could still meet. She didn't get back to me. Through my remaining interviews, as respondents told stories that tiptoed around their ambivalence to white gay newcomers, I couldn't help but quietly miss her willing honesty.

I have learned from a young age that the street will always be dangerous when you have the distinct swagger of a queer man. The only time I have ever been called a faggot was in Harvard Square Cambridge by a white man in a car. This does not stop me from combining my subconscious wariness of hulking straight men with my

subconscious wariness of markers of difference tied up with assumptions of criminality. I do not cross the street when I see black men walking towards me. But I never let them out of my sight.

There is something to this, of course. I have learned the tricks: to find out if someone is following you walk in a rectangle around the block or cross the street and then cross back. If you are still being followed you run. And call the police. Theoretically, this scenario would play out the same with all men (I own my gendered assumptions that view women as victims and not threats to me) regardless of color. But if a white man wearing a pea coat or carrying a laptop bag is walking close behind me I will let my guard down.

I do not walk in Columbia Heights by myself after 11pm. I know plenty of people who have been mugged. I know people who have been brutally assaulted. I do not want to be one of these people. I do not cross the street when I see a black man, but I do mark him as a sign of potential danger. Two white men walking down the street do not inspire the same fear. A black man with a feminine swagger or a pea coat go unmarked in my second by second map of a dangerous territory. Danger is real, the link between race, class and incidents of crime in my neighborhood is real. But how can this be logged without using it as a bullet point to prove an argument about perceptions of black menace. How can you train your brain to treat every passer by as innocent until proven guilty without being cavalier about your own safety?

CHAPTER FOUR

BEYOND THE GAYBORHOOD: LGBTQ RESIDENTS AND THE SEARCH FOR INTERSECTIONAL SPACES

After our first two scheduled interviews had to be rescheduled due to last minute meetings on Capitol Hill, Theresa and I finally meet up at a coffee shop downtown near her office where she works as a lobbyist for New York City. Theresa and her fiancé Sherri, both in their early 30s, have been living in Columbia Heights for the last few years. Both women love the neighborhood and plan to stay after they are married. Throughout our conversation, she explains why the neighborhood appealed to her. “I think it's important to have a mix of culture and a mix of identity. I think that for me, I like the clashing of culture and race and economics. I think that it adds richness in a neighborhood.” As a lesbian of color, this mix is especially important. Theresa grew up in a predominantly white environment and it is important to “see people that look like me.” Unlike the less racially and economically diverse “gayborhoods” such as of Dupont Circle and Logan Circle, she appreciates Columbia Heights for its demographic diversity.

I interviewed Theresa and nine other LGBTQ-identified Columbia Heights residents to understand how these residents conceptualized their neighborhood. Each interview was approximately one hour and was guided by broad questions about their experience in Columbia Heights (Appendix A). Because popular and scholarly narratives of “gay gentrification” and “gay enclaves” are such a large part of contemporary urban development, I wanted to use an ethnographic analysis of LGBTQ residents to understand how sexuality and space are mutually constitutive parts of Columbia Heights’s shifting landscape.

Columbia Heights is not known as a “gayborhood,” what I define as a neighborhood that has a distinctly visible LGBTQ presence made up of residents, passers-by, bars and shops catering to a LGBTQ clientele. Despite not being known as a gay enclave, there is a noticeably queer presence in the neighborhood. What makes Columbia Heights different than more established gay enclaves, if anything? Though LGBTQ residents are a visible presence throughout Washington D.C., neighborhoods such as Dupont Circle and Logan Circle have especially evolved into enclaves with these characteristics. The main question organizing this inquiry was why respondents chose Columbia Heights over these more traditional “gayborhoods.” My respondents’ reflections reveal insight into how sexuality operates in the development process and how Columbia Heights serves as a unique case study that complicates traditional notions of queer space.¹

Examining LGBTQ residents’ experience specifically offers another opportunity to understand how difference shapes interactions in Columbia Heights. In this chapter, I juxtapose residents’ reflections with a discussion of the gay-led gentrification narrative that has been used by developers and residents alike. I unpack the ways LGBTQ sexuality is used as a signifier for whiteness and middle and upper-classness. Similarly, I explore how some LGBTQ residents resist those associations and see Columbia Heights as a space in which LGBTQ people can coexist with people of color and working-class people, without the racial and class-based segregation of more established enclaves. This is especially important for LGBTQ people who themselves are people of color and/or working class. Because of LGBTQ sexuality’s link to the gentrification process, examining

LGBQ residents specifically highlights yet another way in which markers of difference influence who lives in Columbia Heights and how they interact with one another.

Because of the informal and often contested definitions surrounding the identity of a neighborhood, my theorization of Columbia Heights' character relies primarily on my respondents' own conceptualizations. Among my respondents there seemed to be some consensus that Columbia Heights had markers of queerness. Thomas, a gay, white, forty-something city planning consultant jokes, "in terms of who lives here, it's like if you - I have one friend who likes to say you can't swing a cat by the tail and not hit a gay. I think that's true." He goes on to tell me that he does see "an increasing gayification of the neighborhood."

"It's almost like when you buy a car and then you see everybody all of a sudden has the same car," Theresa muses. "It's like, well I live here and I'm gay. So now everybody...around is gay and like holding hands and kind of walking around." She also looks beyond the influx of gay newcomers, wresting sexuality from its popular association with the professional class. Theresa notes, "there's always been a young black queer culture in Columbia Heights, but I feel like it's becoming more and more visible." In Columbia Heights, there are multiple planes of queerness intersecting with other markers of difference that together bring its identity as a somewhat queer area into focus.

Michael, a forty-something editor, agrees that he has seen an influx of gay "pioneers" in recent years. Yet, as a native Washingtonian and an African American gay man, he has always felt the neighborhood has had a "gay vibe." He points out that Nob Hill- the oldest bar catering to gay, male African Americans- was operating for years

before he moved from his upper middle-class childhood home on the “Gold Coast” of upper 16th street.

All of these respondents’ comments illustrate the importance of legitimizing the subjective intuition that goes into placemaking under the official radar of statistics. In the absence of hard data charting the population of LGBTQ residents in the area, not to mention LGBTQ flaneurs that move through Columbia Heights, these conceptions shape the shared knowledge of Columbia Heights’s queerness. Like the women who “told two friends,” in Tamar Rothenberg’s study of urban placemaking among lesbians, these residents have come to know Columbia Heights as an in-network site based on their own unique social locations and connections with other local LGBTQ people.²

Some respondents defined Columbia Heights’s queerness using Dupont and Logan as comparison. Thomas remarks, “I do see maybe like an increasing gayification of the neighborhood. Because my friends when we talk about the gay areas of the city, we don’t talk about Dupont, we talk about Columbia Heights.” Theresa notes, “it’s almost as if Dupont has grown out and Logan Circle has grown up to Columbia Heights.” She worries about displacement, though, wondering if the minority enclaves and groups will “still be present or will it become completely white and affluent and look more like Logan Circle... and Dupont.”

The comparative nature of their definitions is meaningful in that it constructs Columbia Heights as something distinct and, in many cases, something *better* than the alleged safe and supportive spaces of Dupont and Logan. This distinction is often because of the demographic diversity that prevents someone like Sherri from associating Columbia Heights with the traditional, gentrified gay enclave. Sherri, Theresa’s fiancé, is

a thirty-something lesbian of color and prominent fundraiser/consultant in the area. She agrees with Theresa's sentiment that Columbia Heights holds a good "mix" of people. In Sherri's estimation, it is not *just* a gay neighborhood. "I don't think Columbia Heights is at all a gay community," she says. "It's a melting pot of diversity." Implicit in her statement is the association of gay communities with communities that lack demographic diversity. This uniqueness is more than just an objective reality. It holds an abstract value for people looking for something beyond the traditional idea of the homogenized gayborhood.

This chapter expands literature on gay enclaves to examine Columbia Heights as a case study presently distinct from more well-known and more visibly queer enclaves such as the Castro in San Francisco, Greenwich Village in Manhattan, and Park Slope in Brooklyn. I argue that Columbia Heights is a landscape that represents a shift to a multi-identity and sometimes post-identity understanding of sexuality. This shift offers the potential for a space that promotes interaction and coalition between people with various intersecting identifications along lines of race, class, and gender rather than interaction solely on the basis of shared sexual identity.

The move away from more visible queer spatial formations, however, potentially reinforces what Lisa Duggan defines as homonormativity or "politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption."³ Considering gay enclaves' long history in shaping queer activism, in some ways, residents' disinterest in being part of queer spatial formations threatens politicized engagement with difference.

This chapter also examines the link between gay enclaves and neoliberal development, exploring how sexuality has been used to forward gentrification. Narratives and enactments of gay-led gentrification are endorsed by city officials and private developers and are used to develop Columbia Heights in a way that privileges middle and upper-middle-class (often white) residents.

After researching how residents conceptualize their presence in the neighborhood, however, I argue that part of this move away from more visible “gayborhoods” reflects an investment in a broader diversity. In addition to their desire to be around other LGBTQ people, many respondents connected their own experience as marginalized people with the racial, ethnic and- to a lesser extent- class marginalization of many other non-LGBTQ residents. Living in a space that reflected intersecting identity struggles appealed to respondents much more than living in the often class and race segregated neighborhoods of Dupont and Logan.

I suggest that, for some LGBTQ residents (especially queers of color), Columbia Heights is a landscape in which multiple forms of marginalization are spatially tied together, opening up a literal and figurative “space” for coalitional anti-racist, anti-classist, and queer positive work. At the very least, the demographic diversity of Columbia Heights creates forced contact among disparate groups, offering moments of tension and coalition that work against the hierarchies of race, class, and sexuality that neoliberal rhetoric aims to hide. To conclude the chapter, I examine one such site of “contact” between divergent groups. I analyze the rhetoric of “safety” and illustrate how difference affects violence and how safety is about more than LGBTQ “safe spaces.”

To research this chapter, I collected respondents through word-of-mouth and posts on the Columbia Heights listserv. I interviewed ten Columbia Heights residents who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer. Though two of the queer-identified residents I spoke with were also transgender, I did not specifically seek out trans respondents. Rather than succumbing to the reductive grouping of “LGBT” experience in several queer studies texts, my omission is meant to acknowledge the uniqueness of transgender experience. Though intricately linked to the issues facing LGBQ people, transgender experience deserves a more complex and dedicated analysis that is beyond the purview of my own study of Columbia Heights and the rubric of the gay enclave.⁴

My respondents ranged in race, ethnicity, gender, age, occupation, and renter/owner status. All of the respondents willing to speak with me were educated professionals. Though their class backgrounds vary, the observations drawn from this chapter are necessarily limited by the middle and upper-middle-class social location of the respondents that accounted for this chapter’s primary research. Despite this limitation, however, this group of respondents offers rich reflections on the meaning of sexuality and space in people’s lives. While not immediately transferable to all LGBQ residents, their insight sheds light on how Columbia Heights functions as a site of intersecting difference.

Away From the Enclave: Shifting Spatial Formations

Before discussing LGBQ sexuality and its role in shaping the cultural landscape, I want to theorize Columbia Heights’s *in between-ness*: a neighborhood that does not easily fit the mold of other case studies and histories of gay and lesbian enclaves. It is not

defined by most residents as a “gay enclave,” and yet its LGBQ population is too rooted and visible to be merely an unmarked heteronormative space. Is Columbia Heights a site in which LGBQ residents view their sexuality as a part of a larger urban diversity: a site where multiple marginalized people can convene? Or is Columbia Heights a site for residents who believe that enough equality has been achieved that sexuality is no longer a salient reason to organize space? As sociologist Amin Ghaziani argues in his discussion of the declining gay-ness of gayborhoods, “assimilation motivates some gays to think of their sexuality as indistinguishable from straights.”⁵ Is Columbia Heights a space for coalition among marginalized people or is it a space organized around the neoliberal assumption that discrimination has largely been eradicated? Depending on whom you ask, both.

Instead, multiple definitions of Columbia Heights circulate evading the mainstream acknowledgement of the space as a “gayborhood.” When speaking of Columbia Heights’s development, residents reference gay, white male-led gentrification. Those looking for it (as a target of solidarity or violence,) can see feminine, stylish men and some similarly non-normative women walking down the streets in numbers that suggest a sizeable LGBQ population of residents and transients. However, there are no businesses marketing themselves as LGBQ bars and clubs. There are no rainbow bedecked lightposts that sometimes dot the streets of Dupont Circle. The pride parade doesn’t pass by, nor are there any clinics or centers catering specifically to LGBTQ residents. In other words, there are markers of institutionalized and/or rooted queerness present and there are markers that are absent.

Amin Ghaziani notes that, in order to understand why gay enclaves are shifting to more mixed (along lines of sexuality) spaces, scholars need to understand how and why these neighborhoods initially formed.⁶ Washington D.C. has a sizeable LGBTQ population, with several bars and other establishments that are visibly niched as LGBTQ welcoming spaces. Over the years, neighborhoods like the northwest quadrant's Dupont Circle and the adjoining Logan Circle have been colloquially referred to as the "gayborhood," given the substantial presence of largely gay, bisexual and/or queer men (and to a lesser-extent women) and queer-oriented businesses. These enclaves have followed familiar trajectories of changing urban space.

Once both home to white politicians and other D.C. gentry at the beginning of the 20th century, by mid-century disinvestment and suburbanization had shifted demographics. Both were quickly becoming working-class enclaves with a black resident majority. In the 1970s and early 1980s they experienced a demographic shift as middle and upper-middle-class professionals moved in, rehabbing properties. In the mid 1970s Dupont Circle was the first to attract bohemian and queer residents and visitors. It was home to one of the oldest gay bookstores, Lambda Rising, which opened in 1974.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, bars and restaurants catering to gay men cropped up along its commercial corridors. Despite gaining a national reputation as a gay enclave in the style of New York's Christopher Street and San Francisco's Castro, there was also an influx on upper-middle class residents who did not necessarily identify as gay or lesbian. Though LGBTQ people still have a visible and established presence in the neighborhood, its reputation as an upscale neighborhood has attracted an increasing number of straight-identified, upper-middle and upper-class people.

Logan Circle's identity, once a hot spot for sex trade and pornography shops, began to shift in the 1980s as residents (many of them white gay men,) began to invest in the area and wage vice campaigns against the local sex economy. The investment in Logan Circle among middle and upper-middle class property owners gathered steam over a decade after gentrification in Dupont Circle, partly because Logan Circle was closer to the 14th street corridor that was heavily damaged in the civil uprisings of 1968.

The rise of Logan Circle as "baby Dupont" as one of my respondents called it, gathered speed in the early 2000s with the arrival of retail stores (including the bastion of inevitable gentrification, Whole Foods) and bars catering towards LGBTQ consumers. Logan Circle currently maintains a queer (mainly white, middle and upper-middle class) presence, but it too is experiencing an influx of straight-identified young professionals. Both are still known as "gayborhoods" among those in the know (though Dupont still maintains more of a visible, iconic status as such,) and both are home to majority white, middle- and upper-middle class people.

The gay male led-gentrification process reflected in the shifting landscapes of Dupont and Logan has been reported on and analyzed for years. Manuel Castells's studied the Castro district in San Francisco, arguing that the enclave was formed as a spatial reaction to the mainstream alienation of gay men in the early 1980s.⁷ John D'Emilio's history of rising gay enclaves in port towns such as New York and San Francisco similarly reflected how the convergence of the mobility allowed by wage labor and military service led to the formation of enclaves that gave LGBTQ people the ability to congregate more freely and openly.⁸ Lawrence Knopp's more recent materialist study of gay neighborhood and political formation in New Orleans, illustrates how LGBTQ politics,

spatial formation, and wealth accumulation were all linked in the creation of certain gay enclaves.⁹ Scholars have explored the importance of these spaces in creating networks of support amidst continued marginalization and discrimination along lines of sexuality.

Despite some physical boundaries, the “communities” in question were powerfully imagined as a support network among similarly identified people. As Benjamin Forest argues in his study of West Hollywood, these areas “can be described as ‘communities of memory’ as opposed to ‘lifestyle enclaves.’ Members of a community of memory are tied to both the past and the future of this group; this makes the community ‘genuine’ or ‘real.’”¹⁰ Forest’s encapsulation speaks to the nature of gay enclaves as imagined communities imbued with narratives of oppression, solidarity, and- I would argue- positive “revitalization” of disinvested urban areas. In light of the lack of formal statistics that chart LGBTQ residents’ living patterns, gay neighborhoods must be defined based on informal methods such as self identification, local shared knowledge, and the intuition of LGBTQ people walking through the streets and reading a concentration of queer bodies.¹¹

In recent years, celebratory histories have been complicated with analyses of racial and gender marginalization within gay spatial formations. Anne Marie Bouthilette’s work on gay and lesbian neighborhood formation in Vancouver has critiqued Castells’s assertion that lesbians are somehow inherently less territorial, instead illustrating the disparities in wealth and life circumstance that have led to less spatially concentrated networks of queer women.¹² Queer of color scholars such as Charles Nero and Martin Manalansan have argued that gay neighborhood formation is inextricably linked to systemic hierarchies of class and race. Nero specifically critiques Knopp’s

failure to include the history of racial discrimination in housing and wealth accumulation that has led to homogenously white enclaves.¹³ Manalansan deconstructs the universal language used in the marketing of luxury residences near the Christopher Street piers to reveal how niched development has policed and marginalized working class queers of color.¹⁴

What remains constant throughout all of these intellectual contributions is a focus on spaces typically thought of as queer such as the Castro, Christopher Street in New York, West Hollywood, and Vancouver's West End and Commercial Drive areas. This overwhelming focus on urban spaces has also created a sense of "metronormativity," Judith Halberstam's term describing the hegemonic narrative that privileges "coming out" as a spatialized gesture that equates the urban milieu with freedom and rural and suburban areas as dangerous and repressive. Her own work, in addition to case studies such as those in John Howard's investigation of rural sexuality, *Men Like That*, has begun to expand explorations of queer networking outside the urban sphere.¹⁵

My examination of Columbia Heights builds on these contributions, departing from a traditional focus on an urban gay enclave. Columbia Heights has been known in some circles as a destination for queer networking sites. It was home to Nob Hill a bar catering to gay, bisexual, and otherwise queer black men. Opened as a private club for upscale patrons in 1953, it became a public bar in the mid 1950s until it closed in 2004. Though a vital part of middle-class African American collective history, Nob Hill does not occupy the same prominence in D.C.'s mainstream cultural memory that establishments in Dupont Circle and other parts of the city hold.

Contemporary Columbia Heights may not have the visibly queer-friendly bars and stores or the rainbow flags of neighborhoods like Dupont and Logan. It does, however, have a substantial amount of LGBQ residents. Again, formal statistics cannot prove or disprove this assumption, but my respondents' and my own anecdotal knowledge of the neighborhood reveals Columbia Heights as a destination for LGBQ residents even though it is not considered a queer enclave. Borrowing from Moira Kenney's work on gay and lesbian placemaking in Los Angeles, I conceptualize Columbia Heights as part of a "multicentered geography," in which "the struggle has largely been one of being present and visible within the urban whole, rather than designated enclaves."¹⁶

This approach moves away from privileging sites of consumption of goods and services catered to an LGBQ clientele in scholarship about sexuality and neighborhoods. I will return to this question of sexuality, identity and the market momentarily, but address these links here to underline the factors that define and shape LGBQ enclaves. In Columbia Heights, while residents do "buy in" to a neighborhood informally known for its influx of LGBQ residents via rent and mortgages, residents do not complement that investment by patronizing local sites of consumption such as explicitly queer bars, bookstores, and meeting places which would further reinforce the area's definition as a traditional gay enclave.

Sex and the City: Appropriating Narratives of Gay Gentrification

Throughout scholarship on queer spatial formations, in popular media, and within my respondents' own reflection, the narrative of gay-led gentrification has been a popular trope used when discussing the redevelopment of urban areas. From the early work of

Manuel Castells to quips on the popular sitcom *Will and Grace*, gay-led gentrification has been marked and reinforced as a phenomenon.¹⁷ Gay, white, upper-middle and upper-class men are especially linked to the gentrification.

The narrative is often as follows: gay “canaries,” as Richard Florida tactfully refers to them, looking for a neighborhood to call home often move into disinvested, urban neighborhoods. They are affordable and offer a space in which they can develop a safe and supportive enclave. Once moved in, these new residents rehab properties, encourage the arrival of boutiques, cafes, and bars, and generally “spruce up” the neighborhood. Once the neighborhood has been “successfully” gentrified, less daring residents with more normative cultural capital to risk feel comfortable moving into these neighborhoods. Much like their inherent knack for aesthetics in other arenas, gays are credited and praised with turning the neighborhood into an area safe for middle and upper-middle-class white people. Sometimes the epilogue to this narrative involves the “de-gayification” of the neighborhood, as heteronormative residents arrive en masse and threaten to price out the very individuals who initially “took a risk” and invested capital and sweat equity into the neighborhood.

Often times a variation of this narrative is used as an informal real estate truism: once the gays have established territory it becomes safe for other upper middle-class white residents to arrive. The narrative reduces queer sexuality to a depoliticized, economically viable product being offered in the urban marketplace. It hinges on stereotypical assumptions about gay identity and removes discussions of marginalization and discrimination, replacing it with a patronizing narrative that asserts the worth of gay men lies only in what they can do for culture at large. Despite the patronizing and

stereotypical representations of queer sexuality that bolster the narrative, this process is viewed by many as a positive transformation. Ultimately, though, like the hairdresser confidante, the gay gentrifier is often viewed as an implicitly less-than helper. While they may provide a valuable service, this adulation often does not translate to sustained advocacy to end heteronormative and homophobic structures.

When gentrification is being critiqued, however, often times gays are framed as the villain. The coming of white gay men becomes the symbol of coming displacement and neglect of indigenous residents of color.¹⁸ As seen by the email exchange that began this chapter and by earlier conversations about “single people” with Valerie in chapter two, queer sexuality can be shorthand for whiteness, upper-middle-classness and gentrification.

Sexuality by itself does not define the popular vision of the gentrifier. Queers without access to capital and class status cannot be gentrifiers. This is a narrative specifically about queers who have the money to gentrify. Though critiques of white, male, and the middle upper-middle class privilege are activated in some negative reactions to gentrification, it is important to also recognize that critiques also activate homophobia. By critiquing gentrification as a distinctly gay phenomenon, detractors link sexuality with immorality. It is not that gay men should be above reproach, but that that marker of difference continues to be systemically marginalized while all of the other identity markers in the narrative (race, class, and gender) are privileged.

To further complicate things, gay men’s marginalized status can also be used to justify development that excludes low-income people of color, as evidenced in Martin Manalansan’s study of New York’s Christopher Street. He shows that real estate

marketing used sexual marginality narratives to sell exclusive luxury condos to gay men.¹⁹ Beyond being targeted by developers, LGBTQ people with the resources often make conscious choices to gentrify neighborhoods, pushing out and policing longtime residents in the process. The acknowledgement of oppression based on one marker of difference can often be used to absolve and/or reinforce the marginalization of another marker of difference.

In her upcoming study of queer women of color's spatial formations in suburban Los Angeles, Karen Tongson's traces how "deeply, if unintentionally complicit, certain subcultural logics of queer urbanity are with these newly normative, 'creative' processes of gentrification."²⁰ She also argues that scholarship on queer space itself has "produced its share of spatial others for the sake of maintaining its urban reputations and cosmopolitan orientation."²¹ Celebrating LGBTQ subcultural spatial and cultural forms associated with aesthetics and urbanity validates LGBTQ people's worth, but does so by celebrating forms that often reinscribe racial and class hierarchies.²² LGBTQ gain cultural ground when they activate this capital. In other words, the asset of being adept at the aesthetic and economic particulars of gentrification is used to gain credibility in a continually homophobic culture. In celebrating style and urbanity, though, LGBTQ people further entrench themselves in inequitable development processes.

Sexuality plays a unique role in the process and narrative of gentrification. In a sense, gay male sexuality does become more valuable in that process. While an upper middle-class white man moving into a disinvested neighborhood signals the potential for the neighborhood to gentrify, this potential is increased exponentially if that man is seen as gay. In that moment, his sexuality is figured as a harbinger of things to come. Gay

sexuality, when combined with whiteness, upper-class status, and maleness, becomes a form of speculative wealth. Sexuality becomes a valuable commodity.

On the other hand, queerness can be derided in a critique of gentrification. It is not a critique solely of his whiteness, maleness, or upper-class status. His gayness is partially blamed or used as short hand for a set of assumptions about his character. Sexuality becomes linked with assumptions about racism and classism. These markers of difference are always defined by the spatial context and their relation to one another. Critiques of gay newcomers partially rely on homophobic assumptions about duplicitous and alien gays. Similarly, invoking a legacy of homophobia to justify enclave formation does not preclude racist and classist assumptions about the frontier neighborhoods LGBTQ newcomers inhabit.

Some of the white gay men that I spoke with did tell stories similar to the popular gay gentrification narrative. Vince, a white, male analyst who has been in the city for 20 years has been moving around the city and arrived in Columbia Heights around five years ago. “I’ve always wanted to live on the... kind of that fringe,” he tells me. “I started in Dupont when Dupont was the fringe, and evolved to Adams Morgan, and now it's Columbia Heights. And eventually I may even see myself going towards Georgia Avenue in that direction. But it's always been fun to see the gentrification that's been happening.” Vince is actively following the “fringe” so as to remain ahead of the gentrification. Though he enjoys the amenities that gentrification brings like the hipster-oriented bars, he does not want to live in a more statically upscale neighborhood like Dupont. In that sense, Vince follows the popular narrative of gay-led gentrification as he has devoted his adult life to moving into neighborhoods right before they gentrify. He wants to be an

active part of that process, even if he feels ambivalent about the end result of the redevelopment.

Aaron, a white lawyer in his 50s who has been in the city for 30 years, told me that he has bought and sold houses throughout the city. He lives in the houses, but also uses them to invest in the real estate market. After selling his house in Logan Circle when the Whole Foods broke ground in 1999, he moved to the neighboring Shaw neighborhood, a predominantly black working-class area. When the massive convention center opened in the area, he sold that house and moved to Columbia Heights, knowing that the DC USA complex was coming in the next couple of years. He calls rehabbing “contagious.” He remembers what it was like when he first moved to Columbia Heights:

Of course we went through a bad period when I first moved up there because um, people saw planting trees and bushes and flowers... And so we had a lot of our bushes cut down, we had a lot of our bushes stolen... First of all, they didn't seem to mind when their weeds were 4-6 feet tall and trash and possibly at least allegations were children were doing drugs. They didn't seem to mind that, but they minded the flowers and the trellis. And again, I think it was symbolic of change and gentrification in what they considered to be a negative sense.

Though Aaron loves Columbia Heights his primary reason for moving to the neighborhood was to make a profit. Knowing that the neighborhood was scheduled to become a more upscale destination, he moved and did his part to beautify the area.

Though Aaron did not specifically reference himself as a typical gay gentrifier, he does frame his contribution to the neighborhood in primarily aesthetic terms. Not surprisingly, the hostility he faced as a newcomer was also manifested in the destruction of artifacts closely tied to his status as a gay gentrifier. As objects tied to traditional notions of femininity and aesthetics, the flowers Aaron mentions are a symbol of his role as a gay gentrifier. For him this association is positive, but for those who destroyed them,

they represented a negative reaction to gentrification colored with a comment on gay sexuality.

Other residents offered a more ambivalent examination of gay-led gentrification. Sherri acknowledges the process and reinforces the narrative without necessarily endorsing it. She explains, “whenever gay folks start to move into a neighborhood, you know that neighborhood is going to start transitioning. It's this sixth sense, this foresight that as soon as the white gay men start buying up townhouses, there's some shit that's about to go down. And that's exactly what happened here.”

Theresa, her fiancé, has recently reevaluated her feelings about gentrification. “When I was younger,” she tells me, “I would say ‘oh my god, gentrification is horrible, it's terrible, you can't have that and blah blah blah.’ And I realize now gentrification is a good thing.... You need to have the grocery store that has the fresh vegetables. You need to have the place to be able to shop. You need to have those things.” For Theresa, gentrification brings needed amenities to longtime residents. Her memories of earlier critiques imply (as do other comments throughout our interview) that she understands the negative things that are associated with gentrification such as displacement. Theresa’s comments are similar to Aaron’s in that they implicitly validate her own role in gentrification. As someone reinforcing or, at the very least, implicated in the redevelopment process, Theresa sees that her influence has not been entirely negative. Unlike Aaron, however, Theresa’s comments allow the ghost of marginalization to linger in her discussion of gay-led gentrification.

Some respondents did not explicitly link themselves with the gay-led gentrification narrative, but their sexual identification did factor into their decision to

move. TJ and Chris, a queer-identified Latina and Latino in their twenties, acknowledged that their decision was partially influenced by their queer friends moving to the area. In their case, moving to the area did not carry the same economic commitment, as they are both renters. The pragmatics of wealth acquisition and property affordability were less important than who was moving to the area and what kind of neighborhood TJ and Chris wanted to inhabit.

Though the owners I spoke with also chose the area for these reasons, some respondents first framed it solely as an investment decision. Thomas says that his decision to move to Columbia Heights “was more a real estate decision. I was looking for a house somewhere Northwest, saw a place that I really loved, and just pulled the trigger.... I wasn't really looking for a particular area in the extent to sort of looking for a gay enclave really wasn't a factor for me when I was buying.” Earlier, however, he told me that he was cognizant of the fact that his new block and even the other people bidding on the house he eventually bought were predominantly gay.

According to TJ, Chris, and Thomas, the decision to move to Columbia Heights did not have anything to do with their desire to live in a gay enclave. The sum of these decisions, however, have led to an increasing influx of LGBQ residents in the neighborhood. LGBQ residents buying real estate, or following other LGBQ friends into a neighborhood begins to change the character of the neighborhood leading to an increased visibility and queer presence.

As other scholarly inquiries have revealed, economics have always played an important role in gay enclave formation. In his study of the Marigny district in New Orleans, Lawrence Knopp challenged Manuel Castells earlier claim that gay enclave

formation was primarily a political and cultural move to create a supportive gay community. The cause of gay enclave formation is not solely cultural nor is it solely economic. Knopp argues that the gay men used real estate transactions, restoration, and preservation as an “alternative accumulation strategy.”²³ He calls it “a completely unorganized process, planned and directed by no one,” but acknowledges that the process was soon directed by those residents and developers with the most economic clout.²⁴ Knopp illustrates the importance of not over-determining economic or cultural factors in the gay-led gentrification process. Along those lines, I argue that Columbia Heights’s formation as a potentially LGBTQ space is not just a hap-hazard process resulting from individual choices. It has been the result of economic and cultural factors. In order to better understand the link between LGBTQ sexuality and economics, it is vital to examine how larger institutions like the city government reinforce this link further influencing the formation of neighborhoods that have a visible LGBTQ presence.

Listening to individual residents’ explanations for why they chose to move to a particular neighborhood is an important part of drawing out the nuance of how spaces are formed. This focus on the individual, however, should not obscure the larger work of the city. Similarly, a macro-level critique of a city’s development policy should not completely erase personal responsibility. Consumers cannot be held solely accountable for the choices they make, but I do argue that individual investment choices do affect spaces. These choices are not solely agentic decisions taking place in an unfettered and neutral market. As David Freund argues, this myth of the non-interventionist state obscures the host of programs that have given white middle-class people incentives to buy property, while actively discriminating against residents of color.²⁵ Though Freund’s

focus is on the suburbs of Detroit in early to mid 20th century, his work is applicable to 21st century “block by block” gentrification in Columbia Heights. The gentrification borne out of the supposedly free market is the result of several local and federal policies ranging from the sharp decrease in public housing to FHA loans that require applicants to have substantial capital to rehab properties to first time homeowner lotteries that have income caps well above the poverty line.

Although some were beneficiaries, these programs were not explicitly targeted towards LGBTQ people so where does sexuality fit into this equation? I argue that city officials and private developers use a middle and upper-middle class, often white and male gay sexuality as a form of capital to forward upwardly redistributive development. Perhaps the most explicit example is the influential work of Richard Florida, a scholar who also moonlights as a consultant for several city governments. Florida’s strategy is to locate cities with the potential to grow the creative class through his “bohemian gay index” which charts how many artists and gay people live in a particular area. The more of them, the more likely the space will become a gentrified hub of middle to upper-middle-class intellectual labor. He explains:

Artistic and gay populations also cluster in communities that value open mindedness and self-expression. And, their status as historically marginalized groups means that artistic and gay population tend to be highly self reliant and receptive to newcomers. They’ve had to build networks from scratch, mobilize resources independently, and create their own organizations and firms.²⁶

Florida even goes so far as to dub gays “the canaries of the Creative Age.”²⁷ His metaphor perfectly encapsulates the exploitation built into his pseudo-scientific assumptions about the link between sexuality and prosperity. Like miners’ canaries, gays reliably sacrifice their well-being to aid the presumably heterosexual creative classes who

only move in once danger has been minimized. To add another layer to this exploitative metaphor, low-income residents of color who have been fighting for resources for decades are equated with toxic gas. Ultimately, Florida's endorsement of tolerance towards gays is a weak afterthought in his larger conceptualization of gays as a resource to be mined for the profit and prosperity of cities, developers, and incoming creative class residents. Marginalized sexuality is economically valuable and should thus be encouraged. Accepting gays is viewed solely in terms of capital, evidenced partially by the fact that Florida never explicitly addresses LGBTQ civil rights' struggles.

Linking Florida to the actual development policy of cities is not circumstantial. He has been an influential consultant and he candidly references his influence in driving economic and political decisions within cities. In *Flight of the Creative Class*, he recalls, "another real estate investor once said of my work, 'you have provided a map of where to invest.' That was hardly what I had intended, but it is nonetheless true: by their very nature, my regional indicators identified real estate hotspots."²⁸ It may not have been his original intention, but his work actively encourages cities to use gay enclaves to access commercial and individual investment.

Using LGBTQ canaries as a speculative investment tool continues in Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost's *Gay Atlas*, a book that features a Forward penned by Richard Florida. The atlas is the culmination of an innovative statistical analysis of gay spatial formations. Using census data of unmarried same-sex domestic partners, they create speculative maps of where partnered LGBTQ residents live. Though the census's lack of acknowledgement of sexuality makes it difficult to prove the statistics presented in the book, Gates and Ost provide a valuable resource for scholars doing work on space and sexuality. They also,

according to their introduction, offer a resource for “gay and lesbian service providers, activist organizations, and an increasing number of companies seeking to market to the gay and lesbian population.”²⁹ The sociological activism inherent in the book’s project thus goes hand in hand with a niche marketing opportunity. The acknowledgment and implicit acceptance of gays and lesbians is framed as a worthy endeavor partially because it translates to more successful capitalism. The fact that Gates and Ost’s data mining focuses exclusively on LGBTQ couples makes the endeavor all the more homonormative. These proper, cohabitating family units are ready to help grow the American economy.

Later in the introduction, the authors present a celebratory example of how the project can be used, noting that in Baltimore and Detroit, developers have successfully taken advantage of gay spatial formations to market apartments to an LGBTQ clientele. In addition to supporting the freedom-through-consumption narrative, the *Gay Atlas* also encourages using sexuality to reinforce development. Given the atlas’s close ties to Florida and his ethos, these maps offer similar “hot spots” that can be located as profitable sites of investment and development.

Columbia Heights has not been specifically marketed as a gay enclave. The city has not endorsed any rainbow banners or other marketing/tourism tactics that have aided in producing revenue for neighborhoods such as a Dupont Circle. LGBTQ residents have, however, been welcomed to Columbia Heights by the city and private developers. The broad language of “diversity” in planning documents can encapsulate gays and lesbians. Similarly, Columbia Heights’s Councilmember Jim Graham, an openly gay man, often uses the rhetoric of diversity to acknowledge and validate the neighborhood’s LGBTQ population³⁰As evidenced in the advertising of Kenyon Square and Highland Park in the

previous chapter, gay sexuality is used to market upscale development to both LGBTQ residents and those residents who equate LGBTQ residents with the upscaling of neighborhoods.³¹

From Florida's scholarship and consulting work to Gates and Ost's *Atlas* to the ads used to sell luxury condos, a classed version of queer sexuality is used to sell uneven development in Columbia Heights. These are specific examples in which sexuality is commodified to spur investment. The narrative attracts investment from straight-identified people who are familiar with the "gay gentrifier" stereotype seen in popular culture. It also lures LGBTQ people into the neighborhood, giving them cultural capital as urban saviors and giving them a chance to make huge profits should their rehabbed properties rise in value.

LGBTQ residents, as evidenced by Aaron and others' comments, are often complicit in this process. I do not argue that they have all been duped into helping developers. The narrative of gay-led gentrification is rooted in the established spatial patterns of middle-class, white LGBTQ people. It was not necessarily started by the state or by developers, but it has been encouraged through official channels: through advertising, FHA loan incentives and other programs that promote private, block by block gentrification. One of the tactics used to sell this kind of development has been the narrative of gay-led gentrification. Uneven development is framed as an independent phenomenon and the story of LGBTQ marginalization frames it as a social justice success story. Both frames use LGBTQ sexuality to justify a development process that threatens low-income residents of color, selectively choosing to validate one minority group in service of the largescale neglect of others.

This increased acceptance and visibility counteracts historic marginalization of LGBQ people for those that can afford to buy into gay-led gentrification. The cultivation of a friendly market and cultural capital for white middle and upper-middle-class gays, however, is not the same as equality. As Alexandra Chasin argues, “advertising to gay men and lesbians has often promised that full inclusion in the national community of Americans is available through personal consumption.”³² Lisa Duggan’s more recent examination of homonormativity illustrates that the freedom-through-market formulation encourages a “privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption.”³³ Encouraging LGBQ residents to buy into a celebratory narrative of gay gentrification invalidates those LGBQ people that cannot afford to (or do not want to) buy in to this luxury version of freedom.

The formulation also hampers coalitional activism that links LGBQ oppression with other forms of racial, class, and gender marginalization. LGBQ people are encouraged to buy into freedom even though that purchase is built on the exploitation and displacement of other marginalized groups, including low-income LGBQ residents of color. Furthermore, those that buy in are complicit in their own exploitation, as sexuality has been appropriated to generate profit for developers.

Despite the exclusion and exploitation built into this equation, it is next to impossible to fully extricate LGBQ identity from the realm of capitalism. John D’Emilio’s seminal “Capitalism and Gay Identity” charts how queer men’s alienation from the nuclear family led them to newly available wage labor jobs in urban areas.³⁴ Capitalism created the circumstance and spaces from which urban gay culture emerged. As Ann Pelligrini’s notes in her recent engagement with D’Emilio’s piece, “economic

policies have not simply followed on developments in lesbian and gay identity, but have been also in some way generative. To the extent that the discourse of rights was, at its emergence, marked by property relations (rights as a kind of private property), perhaps this form of social address- in which capitalism reaches out to queer consuming subjects- is the very fulfillment of rights and, thus, a fulfillment that can only disappoint.”³⁵

In other words, the very rhetoric of “rights” that forms the basis of debates about LGBQ justice is built on the assumption that once LGBQ people gain full property rights they will finally achieve freedom. To apply Pelligrini’s analysis to the example of LGBQ sexuality and urban development, the achievement of full support in Washington D.C. from marriage rights to the right to be wooed into a gay-friendly condo offers some comfort and access to resources but still reinforces a system (gentrification on the small scale, capitalism on the grand) built on exploitation of others. She writes that “we cannot disarticulate lesbian and gay identities from capital,” but argues that this acknowledgement must be the starting off point of critique rather than a defeatist or celebratory end point.³⁶

As the use of gay-led gentrification narratives has made clear, LGBQ spatial formations are used to forward development that disproportionately benefits certain residents. Despite the rhetoric’s focus on “diversity” and “equality,” these narratives threaten to shut down larger conceptualizations of justice that benefit not just incoming LGBQ residents, but low-income residents, residents of color, and the LGBQ residents that do not have the capital of middle-classness and whiteness to buy into the gay gentrification narrative/process.

Safe Spaces, Diverse Places: Reasons to Choose Columbia Heights

The reasons my respondents gave for choosing to live in Columbia Heights were not always framed as a conscious move away from certain spatial formations associated with urban gay life. As discussed in the previous section, some respondents referenced pragmatic and seemingly apolitical reasons for their move. Joe tells me that the number one reason for him and his fiancé Patrick's decision to move to Columbia Heights was based on value, "you know, what we could get for our price point vs. at Dupont/Logan. And then the other thing was sort of just talking through and thinking about the neighborhood. And it did become really appealing."

As an owner who invests in real estate, Aaron sees the influx of LGBQ residents as a reflection of real estate investment patterns dictated by the speculative value of an area. "Prices went up so then [gay residents] started moving east and north, and I would think that a lot of people come to Columbia Heights because of housing prices. If they had their absolute preference and had all the money in the world, they'd probably live in Georgetown, and then Dupont Circle next and Capitol Hill third." Similarly, Thomas sees an increase of LGBQ residents moving into places outside established gay enclaves as primarily economic: "I think a lot of it's just financial. As the market was exploding, I think people were looking to get in on a good investment regardless of where they were. People want to make money in real estate." Each comment reveals that these choices represent a shift away from the desirability and necessity of more traditional gay enclaves.

Thomas also points to increased mobility, arguing "does it really matter if I'm in Columbia Heights and I go out in Dupont and I go out and live in someplace else like

that? I can just get in a cab or do whatever I need to do to get there. So I don't think there's that sense of community. It's not like in the 60s where if you were gay you wanted to live in the gay community in your city.” Thomas may have chosen Columbia Heights for its economic value, but increased flexibility to travel to more established gay commercial and social centers and a sense of support in Columbia Heights influenced his decision to move here. In other words, places that support his gay identity are important, but changing political, cultural, and technological tides have allowed him to stay linked to the “community” while in Columbia Heights.

Despite my respondents’ decision to reside in Columbia Heights rather than Dupont and Logan, the need for accepting spaces associated with the idea of gay enclaves remained. When he was in his mid-twenties, Aaron- a white, lawyer and former ANC commissioner for the neighborhood- came to Washington D.C. with plans to move back to his home state of Ohio within a few years. “And then I discovered I was gay and that changed everything,” he jokes. “Because I couldn’t really go back to Springfield, Ohio- I didn’t think I could- with my family and I couldn’t really run for political office, although some brave people have. It’s just a hard way to go, really. So I wound up staying here and just happily here for 30 years.” Citing D.C.’s “gay friendly” laws passed in the last decade such as non-discrimination statutes and the institution of civil unions and same sex marriage, Aaron feels the city as a whole provides a place where he can express his sexuality with little incident.

As Michael Warner argues in his discussion of the cultural importance of New York City’s Christopher Street, areas that offer a certain degree of gay visibility and social and juridical support serve as a “distant reference point” for LGBTQ people in

spaces they perceive as physically and psychologically violent.³⁷ As a native Ohioan, Aaron conceptualizes Washington D.C. as a space of possibility. Discussing her brief interactions with tourists on the streets of Washington D.C., Theresa believes that, “when you're on vacation and you see two men holding hands or two women holding hands or just kissing each other goodbye on the way, that's a teachable moment for the family from Arkansas.” In addition to offering Aaron and Theresa a space where they themselves feel less restricted to express their sexuality, both view the city as an important space of hope for those outside it.

Aaron and Theresa rely on metronormative narratives that value the city at the expense of suburban and rural areas. Their personal experiences, however, illustrate the importance the city has played in their own sense of wellbeing and safety. Their stories reveal how entwined personal experience and larger narratives are. Urban space has been important to them, but its import is most likely partially influenced by larger narratives of gay migration that values the city over the country and middle-class urbanity over low-income provinciality.

Theresa and Aaron's conceptualization of their current city illustrates the continued desire for “safe spaces.” This desire is important despite the fact that they reside outside neighborhoods constructed as “safe” for open expressions of queer sexuality.³⁸ Theresa even admits that, despite all the reasons she is an enthusiastic Columbia Heights resident,

there are still times when Sherri and I do not hold hands walking down the street in Columbia Heights because we get heckled a lot. Sometimes you don't want to have to think about it. I just want to be able to go outside, and if I want to hold hands, I want to hold hands. If I want to kiss her goodbye, I want to kiss her goodbye. And I don't want it to turn into a

thing. I also want to be very smart because I don't want to make us a target for any type of thing. So it's a very frustrating place to be.

Throughout our conversation, Theresa articulated many reasons why she has chosen Columbia Heights over spaces allowing more visibility, but her comment reveals that there has been a trade off. Her inability to “not have to think about” expressions of affection prevents Columbia Heights from being conceptualized as some sort of post-gay utopia in which queer acceptance and racial, ethnic, and class diversity mesh in an orgy of mutual respect. The feeling of safety is mediated by one’s social location and the concept of safety is a shifting and subjective construct within wider relations of power.

It is also dependent on the individual. Theresa’s fiancé has a different perception of safety for LGBTQ people in Washington D.C. Sherri explains that Dupont circle, “was created out of a need for a ghetto, out of a need for a safe space. And I would say that the District of Columbia has long since been a very open and warm and safe place for LGBT people. And so there's a not a ghettoization anymore for us. We don't have to live in the safe community of Dupont where we can walk around and be who we are.” Unlike Theresa, Sherri seems to feel safer in Columbia Heights. This sentiment may also reflect her alienation as a black woman in spaces like Dupont, a phenomenon I will turn to later in this chapter. I will also address ideas about “safety” later in this chapter, but I offer Aaron, Theresa, and Sherri’s comments here to illustrate my respondents’ continued desire for some of the comforts associated with gay enclaves.

Respondents offered a variety of reasons for moving to Columbia Heights, many of which marked a dissatisfaction or general disregard for a more visible “gayborhood.” Aaron says he tends

to think that idea of a gay ghetto or the gayborhood is fading. It's almost like having a gay bar. There's still gay bars around, but probably the most progressive design of the times would be the nightclub we have up in our area [Wonderland, the bar that replaced Nob Hill.] So that's probably symbolic of how a lot of the bars are going. Where they would care less whether you're gay or your not. The people who go there could care less.

Thomas echoed Aaron's postulation that gays were diffusing in favor of a more mixed scene, saying "I think as the community has become more accepted in mainstream America, I think there's been some... I think people are less concerned about trying to live with people that are exactly like them." Aaron and Thomas see Columbia Heights as a reflection of progress. Now that integration in all different kinds of spaces has been normalized, they have begun letting go of earlier identity models that tied sexual identity with a particular spatialized culture.

Vince does not deride mainstream gay culture epitomized by dance clubs and pop divas, but he does express fatigue: "It doesn't matter that I'm gay, I just like to do activities. And listening to Lady Gaga is nice, but it's not something I want to be surrounded by 24/7. So I'm looking for gay diverse adventures." Joe also critiques the "24/7" model of gay cultural immersion. As someone who is partnered and not looking for an "increased pool of potential mates" that a place like Dupont or Logan would offer, Joe enjoys being outside of more concentrated gay neighborhoods. This desire is especially cogent because he works full time at the HRC dealing with gay politics. "Particularly because I work in the LGBT movement," he says, "it can be a lot to just be so steeped in it all day long professionally and then like, you know, everyone around you being queer as well." A diversity of interests, topics, and people are integral to Joe's holistic happiness.

Like Vince, though, this wariness of constant queerness is not meant to be a slight against queer space and culture in general. He adds, "I really do enjoy queer space, but it has to be the right kind. Like, I don't know the last time I went to Halo (an upscale bar in Logan catering to gay men)... Like that environment I find is generally off-putting. It just feels predictable and sort of trite. But I love a homo sonic, or a gay dance night that is explicitly queer but has a much looser inviting sort of atmosphere." For Joe, a welcoming atmosphere is often lacking in spaces traditionally associated with gay social networks. Vince similarly praised Pink Sock, a queer dance party that takes place monthly at Wonderland. These new dance parties, started by local queer DJs and promoters offer spaces that offer less judgment.

Pink Sock and Homo Sonic are both tied to a social network of young incoming queer residents and cultural producers that have forged a queer social scene alternative to traditional gay bars like Halo and Dupont Circle's Cobalt bar. There is also overlap between these parties and the website *The New Gay*, a blog started by Zac Rosen and Ben Carver in 2006. The blog, according to Rosen is to give an outlet to LGBTQ people who do not subscribe to the traditional subcultural norms. Speaking to the *Washington Post*, he explains, "you may not want to come into this fabulous world of big, mega dance club music with all these guys in Hollister T-shirts. It's one way people live, but it's not you. One of the tag lines of [the New Gay] is: 'Be gay and be yourself,' and here, it's often very hard to do both."³⁹

The New Gay's mission statement echoes some of my respondents' desire to set themselves apart from what they see as a mainstream gay culture that is judgmental, materialistic, and vapid. Within that critique lie multiple layers of targets. On the one

hand, this distancing represents a move towards validating alternative cultural and political commitments outside mainstream (implicitly white and middle-class) gay culture. This sentiment has the potential to lead to more coalition between queers and other marginalized groups and may implicitly reference racism and misogyny within white, middle-class dominated gay male social networks. Critiques of mainstream culture can also be seen as a critique of conspicuous consumption and the flaunting of one's power and influence. This opens up room for a queer social formation not based on class ascension. Is the move away from gay social networks and enclaves a wholly positive step or is there something potentially lost in this shift away from the privileging of gay identity?

Gay enclaves have long been the sites of distinct cultural production that have influenced LGBTQ people all over the country. Though cultural production is not limited to these established gayborhoods and though LGBTQ people are far too diverse to be caught under one cultural umbrella, gay enclaves have still provided valuable networks of support, activism, and culture despite the exclusionary nature of some of these formations. When these spatial formations begin dispersing in favor of a neighborhood like Columbia Heights, LGBTQ culture, loosely defined, will be affected. Furthermore, as John D'Emilio, George Chauncey, Elizabeth Kennedy and scores of other queer historians have noted, LGBTQ identity formation is closely tied to the negotiation of space.⁴⁰ When living in or visiting a gay/queer space, one begins to incorporate cultural norms in their own behavior and understanding of themselves as a queer person. This process is not total, nor does it lack agency and negotiation. It does, however, have some effect on forming how people perform their queerness.

The political and social implications of dispersed gay spatial formations are not lost on Aaron. He believes that with the fading importance of the gay ghetto comes the fading of a distinct gay culture itself: “I think for a while, and maybe it still is, that being gay, there was a gay culture. And at least the way I define culture, is that there are distinguishing characteristics of that culture that are different than kind of the general. I think the gay culture is almost becoming less and less.” But that fading is not a bad thing in his estimations. “One characteristic was being discriminated against in every possible way,” he says. “Another part of the culture to me was you had to be secretive about it. Another part is that many were rejected by their family, which had an incredible impact on your entire life. And all this is gradually fading.” Despite all of the negative associations with the gayborhood, he also acknowledges, “I think those who have been out for a long while, they see some of the downsides, the losses. Especially in entertainments and the good times they used to have. But my coming out at 30, I may have missed those good times, whatever those good times were.” Though his trajectory was different, Aaron understands the potential emotional and social blows LGBTQ people face in the post-gayborhood city.

Given the link between spatial formation and identity formation, how does this seeming shift away from discrete gay spaces affect people’s understanding of their identity? The shift away from distinct gay spatial formations could be interpreted as a move towards the post-identity politics so prevalent under neoliberalism. In this interpretation, the move away from LGBTQ identity signals a disengagement with LGBTQ politics. Like those who argue for post-race and post-feminist paradigms, the post-sexuality rubric ignores the continued marginalization of sexual minorities. Chris does

not believe we are ready to be post-identity. “I think we still have so... for the world I want to live in, so far to go,” he says, “that it feels really important to name the difference to continue to make space for the difference.” As a queer person invested in debunking the construction of discrete identity, TJ disagrees with Chris telling him she thinks “post-identity is OK if it’s like actually respectful and intentional.” But she agrees with Chris’s concern, adding “I feel like people are just post-identity because they don’t give a fuck to think about it.” For both, post-identity is an orientation acceptable for an ideal world in which hierarchies of difference are dismantled and identity is allowed to be fluid and equal. At that present moment, though, TJ and Chris worry about becoming “post-identity” before homophobia has been eradicated. For them, naming and even flaunting the difference is a vital part of destabilizing homophobic ideology.

TJ and Chris’s comments remind us of the privilege needed to become “post-identity.” Despite the continued marginalization queers face, some gays and lesbians can also fall back on racial, class and/or other normative privileges. Without regressing to a hierarchized ordering of who is more oppressed than whom, arguably class mobility and other privilege bestowed on those fitting particular norms makes a disengagement with debates about politicized identity easier. TJ and Chris’s comments suggest that Columbia Heights could potentially be a space representing a cultural move toward understanding the links and potential for coalition between marginalized people of different races, ethnicities, classes, and sexualities. It could also represent a move away from the politics of difference towards depoliticization.

For Chris, it is Columbia Heights’s promise of the former that has drawn him here. His queerness is not just a struggle against marginalization based on sexuality. For

him, queerness is about a commitment to intersectional social justice. Chris explains how Columbia Heights fits into his larger political identity:

It's almost that my politicized queer identity being so primary for me makes it so that I don't want it to be primary.And there's this piece of me that I think is the intersectional piece of - there are things that are just as important as my queer identity. Living in communities of color is really important.... Being in a space like this because of my other politics and my other identities makes more sense than being in those spaces. Even if I were to live in San Francisco, I wouldn't live in the Castro still. I would probably live just outside of it.

Chris's embrace of Columbia Heights, with its racial and class diversity *in addition to* its population of LGBTQ residents, reflects his desire to live in spaces that validate the multiplicity of his identity. Columbia Heights potentially serves as a unique space that validates and shapes multiple identities, unlike segregated gay enclaves or heteronormative spaces. Despite the shift away from traditional sites of gay social networks, the turn to neighborhoods such as Columbia Heights potentially offers a space that shapes multiple and intersecting identities beyond the discrete (often white, upper middle-class and male) identity groups welcomed into other, more well-known gay spaces.

Interludes of "I Do": Same Sex Marriage, Territory, and Identity

Before examining how multiple forms of demographic diversity appealed to my LGBTQ respondents, I would like to begin the section with a discussion of same sex marriage. Though the topic seems tangential, it is important for two main reasons: 1) the majority of my respondents brought it up as the main lens through which they examined LGBTQ sexuality and space and 2) It is an example that elucidates how multiple markers of difference intersect on the complex terrain of the cultural and material landscape.

Highlighting some of the issues surrounding race, class, and sexuality- from assumptions of black homophobia to assumptions of white racism- sets the stage for a more explicit discussion of how Columbia Heights residents negotiate their sexual, racial, and class identities in their neighborhood.

Debates about same sex marriage reveal the tensions caused by uneven development.

Like many of the LGBQ respondents I interviewed, a lot of Theresa's discussion about sexuality and Washington, DC focuss on marriage equality. For Theresa, same sex marriage- which was recently legalized by the D.C. council- is not only a personal issue to her and her fiancé Sherri, it has been something they have campaigned for in front of the D.C. Council and at other events. As we discuss her negotiation of Washington D.C. as a black lesbian, she recalls an interaction she once had with a fellow Washingtonian:

We were on the news one time and a low-income black man came out to an event because he saw us on the news. Like, came out and told us. He was just like, "I was so excited, and so proud to see someone that looked like you guys going to this cocktail party in celebration of equality that I wanted to come. Because I realized there was going be people there that looked like me." That's why. If there was only one man that was inclined to get involved who lived in southeast, who was gay, who wanted to be involved in what's going on so this wasn't this ward against ward issue, it was a district-wide issue, then we did something right.

In D.C., marriage equality is not simply an issue that pits LGBQ residents and their allies against mostly heterosexual opponents. It is a debate that has pitted blacks and latinos against whites, low-income people against upwardly mobile professionals, and as Theresa's anecdote reveals, "ward against ward." The reality of this interplay between intersecting identities is far more complicated, but Theresa's story encapsulates a popular narrative that has taken place leading up to the council's vote. It is difficult to pinpoint

the genesis of this narrative, but as the debate waged on, same sex marriage advocates were configured as upwardly mobile white newcomers, while those that opposed same sex marriage were figured as largely homophobic residents of color.

The connection between critiques a same sex marriage and incoming white gentrifiers became clear at the public hearings that led up to the D.C. Council's vote to approve same sex marriage. Often times, residents of color testifying against gay marriage had more to say about sexuality than the usual religious and moral rhetoric. Councilmember Yvette Alexander, one of two members to oppose the bill had this to say: "Its very interesting that we've had hearings that really impact a lot of lives on other issues that I have not seen so many many persons coming to testify... It's very *interesting* how people prioritize."⁴¹ Alexander's indictment is used to discredit a claim for rights, but it is not just simple homophobia. Alexander's comments reveal a frustration with incoming residents' disproportionate investment in issues that affect them, while exerting little effort in helping the staggering problems that face low income residents of color.

A Latino housing advocate testified that "by passing this law you would make a haven for more lesbians and gays to come to the city because they have higher capital ability to purchase so people are going to be forced out from the city."⁴² In the witness's statement, assumptions about gay-led gentrification unfairly conflate sexuality with displacement. However, his comments are not simply homophobic: they contain a valid concern about inequitable publically funded development that allocates far more resources to incoming middle and upper class residents. Rather than wholly discount the comment, it's valuable to acknowledge the underlying message of the complaint.

One example that dominated the local press leading up the same-sex marriage D.C. Council vote was Marion Barry's opposition to same-sex marriage, despite a history of courting gay and lesbian voters as mayor. The popular national blog Queerty.com went so far as to paint the former mayor and current councilmember as a "crazy pants" for his justification of opposing the marriage bill in solidarity with his largely religious constituents in D.C.'s predominantly low-income African American Ward 8.⁴³

Comments about gay marriage not only reflect a large portion of what respondents discussed in our conversations, they also highlight how race, class, and sexuality are all spatialized. For some respondents, same sex marriage seems to represent LGBQ marginalization. It was invoked to illustrate that LGBQ did not have certain political and cultural privilege. Some longtime residents, like those at the hearings, resented LGBQ people's claims that they were marginalized. I argue that that resentment is partially because some longtime residents see LGBQ residents as not only privileged, but as perpetrators of a territorial war to take over their neighborhoods. The debates show that sexuality is always linked to race and class and that the terms of the debate often reflected how residents were fighting the ongoing spatial war of gentrification.

Discussions of same sex marriage also opened up a dialogue about intersectional approaches to difference that the diverse spaces in Columbia Heights possibly represent. As a lesbian of color, Theresa's presence disrupts the rhetoric of same sex marriage drawn along lines of difference. She embraces this role, figuring herself as a kind of embodied counterpoint. The result in this case was a moment in which sexuality, race, and class were unhinged from their usual associations and reformed in a reassuring moment of contact. This anecdote has implications beyond the debate about marriage

equality. The interaction between Theresa and the man who approached her illustrate not only how sexuality is linked to other markers of difference, but how people complicate reductive assumptions about identity in their everyday interactions as well.

Queer scholars such as Lisa Duggan, Alexander Doty, and Michael Warner have articulated the dangers in fighting for same sex marriage. Lisa Duggan argues that the campaign for same sex marriage is part of homonormativity. Alongside the dismantling of affirmative action policies and the conservative-libertarian equality feminism, the fight for same sex marriage is part of a larger neoliberal move towards a “nonredistributive form of ‘equality’ politics.”⁴⁴ In other words, instead of desperately trying to get a place at the table of inclusion as Bruce Bawer popularly advocated, queer activists should be fighting against the structures that have marginalized queers, people of color, working class people, and women.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the mere presence of working class people and people of color within the marriage equality movement does not directly translate to a redistributive, multi-issue agenda. The potential for truly queer and truly just futures are stifled when LGB identity is accepted only if it fits within normative, conservative definitions of respectability like monogamous state-sanctioned marriage. It could be that the man in Theresa’s anecdote could have remained closed off to thinking about queer equality if she was not a visibly feminine, upper-class woman involved in a monogamous relationship. Despite these limits, though, the moment of interaction has the potential to complicate scripts of difference that order the uneven urban geography.

Instead of focusing on the valuable critique of the marriage equality agenda I am interested in using talk about marriage equality to reveal how sexuality, race, and class

are constructed and contested among residents. For Theresa, marriage equality is an issue that counteracts the idea that all LGBTQ residents are insensitive gentrifiers and all residents of color are heterosexual homophobics. Sexuality is wrested from assumptions of racial and class warfare and placed into a larger context of struggle for equality among all marginalized groups that make up D.C.'s population. After telling me about her conversation with the black man from Southeast, Theresa reflected on her role as a same-sex marriage advocate:

That is why we want to continue to be vocal and want to do things like this. Like add our opinion and our voice to it, because we want to show that we exist. And it's just as important for the gay folks that live in Southeast as it is for the gay folks that live in northwest to realize that this isn't about registering at Crate & Barrel. This is about us being able to provide for one another. Just like you work every day, day in and day out to try and provide for our family. We do too. And we want to make sure we have the same protections because we're all at risk. This makes us all vulnerable. And try and get that message out. And I think that our sheer presence and being there and being who we are, you have a responsibility to do so. More of a responsibility than the white gay couple... I'm telling you, a rich white man on TV whining about not being able to get married ain't gonna evoke empathy from this single black mother who is struggling every day.

Despite being within the class bracket of the hypothetical white gay couple she criticizes, Theresa criticizes marriage advocacy as a tool for further class ascension. She believes marriage equality is about a larger struggle for resources and power especially important to marginalized people in desperate need of any available resources offered by the ever-diminishing social welfare state.

As an upper middle-class, non-native white gay male, Joe could be the poster boy of the reductive gay gentrifier script. He, too, is an advocate for marriage equality, both personally and as an employee for the Human Rights Campaign.⁴⁶ He does not see the issue, however, as an isolated cause among more privileged persons. Joe tells me about

his recent engagement, a story he shared with the D.C. Council during the public hearing regarding same sex marriage:

Patrick and I got engaged on our balcony overlooking the civic plaza and the sort of you know, good feelings that brings and how much we enjoy that space because it's always so alive. You know, you see the comings and goings of the neighborhood that is incredibly diverse and all sexual orientations and gender identities and races and socio-economic levels and everything else. The point was that...that kind of diversity that we should be celebrating, and that you know is what marriage equality sort of spoke to me about. You know, it was this way that we're – yet another way we are finding to live with each other despite our differences and appreciate each other.

These sentiments are not that different from the “celebrate diversity” rhetoric stripped of power differentials and used within the process of neoliberal upward distribution. They do, however, offer an interesting opportunity to rethink marriage equality as way into creating a multi-issue, intersectional coalition for social justice. The demographically diverse space of Columbia Heights potentially aids in tying together multiple examples of oppression. While this link, in Joe’s statement, is based on “celebration,” his and Theresa’s comments reflect the potential to support difference while working against marginalization. Whether that conceptual work can translate to an understanding of justice that works against the marginalization built into nonredistributive “equality” remains to be seen. One thing is certain though. These possibilities are fueled by the experience of being “alongside” different people.

Queering the Segregated Gayborhoods: Finding Truly Diverse Spaces

For respondents like Aaron, there is definitely something more to living in Columbia Heights than good real estate value and access to the Metro. It is in intentional embrace of the neighborhood’s demographic diversity. “I see it first as a very diverse

neighborhood, a very accepting neighborhood. And part of that acceptance is the gayness.” Aaron conceptualizes Columbia Heights’s pro-gay atmosphere as tied in with a larger acceptance of other residents of different races and cultures.

As someone with familial ties to the area’s black community, Kyla, a 22 year old, biracial lesbian working with D.C. youth as part of AmeriCorps, sees that heritage as an important part of why she moved back to Columbia Heights after college. “There’s like this long-term sense of community that I have with it that I can still tap into,” she explains. “And there are people and stories and a sense of connectedness that I have that probably means more than anything else to me.” Kyla feels as though Columbia Heights offers her a relatively supportive environment as a queer woman, but she is primarily interested in fostering the ties she has with the community as a woman of color. This is a both/and scenario in which Columbia Heights fosters Kyla’s multiple identifications.

Sherri also loves the neighborhood for its diversity. For her, part of the appeal is that it is a space that has a substantial amount of LGBQ people of different races and classes:

What's also been fascinating to me just watching the community evolve is in DC in general, but Columbia Heights particularly, the young African American gay kids you see. That's really fascinating to me. Because you don't generally see a lot of gay black kids, but DC is very unique in that way. DC is, New York, of course, but DC is - every time I walk up and down the street I'm like wow.

With the exception of her fiancé Theresa, Sherri was the only respondent who referenced queerness among low-income residents of color. Seeing queers of color from working-class backgrounds makes Columbia Heights a more accepting space than the more class and race restrictive enclaves of Dupont and Logan. Though these queers of color are often left out of the LGBQ social worlds my middle and upper-middle-class respondents

inhabited, their presence was indicative of Columbia Heights's potential to provide a space more accepting of multiple forms of sexual marginality.

Respondents' comments about the racial, class, and sexual diversity of Columbia Heights often validated the neighborhood in opposition to Dupont Circle and Logan Circle. The main reason for this differentiation was that Dupont and Logan failed to offer respondents a sense of racial, class, and gender acceptance. Whether they themselves were the target of discrimination or they felt uncomfortable spending time in an aggressively homogenous space, their discomfort references a historical linkage between gay enclave formation and exclusion based on race, class, and gender.

Scholars have traced how markers of gender, race, and class difference have shaped these spaces. Histories of lesbian social formations such as Lillian Faderman's *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* and Madeline Davis and Elizabeth Kennedy's study of working-class Buffalo illustrate how women formed alternative social worlds away from exclusionary gay male spaces.⁴⁷ In his essay "Why Are All the Gay Ghettos White," Charles Nero critiques Lawrence Knopp's earlier work on Marigny tracing the economic and political ways that redlining and other forms of housing discrimination have fostered the creation of specifically white gay enclaves.⁴⁸ He also argues that cultural representations of gay black men have furthered this exclusion as they are constructed as imposters: neither properly black or properly gay. Nero's work shows that the seemingly race-neutral formation of gay enclaves is ordered by racist logic. Christina Hanhardt's work on anti-violence campaigns led by gays and lesbians living in the Chelsea area of New York City in the 1970s illustrates the collective effort, in the name of "safety," to police people of color in gay enclaves. She charts how people of color, "were not only

subject to unjust regulation through policies of racial profiling... but were treated as *inherently* violent.”⁴⁹ Both Nero and Hanhardt’s work show the historical precedence of racism within gay enclaves.

Historian Brett Beemyn traces how racial discrimination shaped gay enclaves in Washington D.C. specifically. He argues that discrimination policies tracing back fifty years have cumulatively cemented the racial, gender, and class segregation of D.C.’s contemporary gay and lesbian social scene.⁵⁰ Beemyn and other local queer historians have uncovered the rich subcultural life of queers of color including a wide network of house parties and bars catering to black men such as Nob Hill.⁵¹ These spaces, however, were not without their own discriminatory practices. Nob Hill, for instance, was primarily for upscale black men. Working-class black men and women often went to neighborhood bars that did not have a specifically gay clientele.

Aaron’s comments about Nob Hill reflect the entrenchment of racial segregation among DC’s gay social scene. He recalls he, “had never stepped foot in Nob Hill, because when it was open I considered that to be an unsafe neighborhood and an unsafe bar.” Though Aaron’s reference to safety implies a concern about violence, his comments still reinforce DC’s territorialized gay space. Vince takes a more celebratory tack, saying, “it’s neat the places like this used to be an old black gay bar and now we’re sitting in the neighborhood pub: *the* neighborhood pub. It’s totally transformed itself from an old, beat up, kind of quiet bar into something that’s very vibrant and accepting. Everyone can come.” Aaron and Vince’s language is reminiscent of comments made by some newcomers discussed in chapter three. Their comments link race to pejorative comments about safety and cleanliness.

Instead of validating the need for black queer social spaces amidst rampant discrimination, these institutions are framed as unsafe, dirty, and discriminatory against white people. Vince also frames vibrancy (a cousin to diversity in dominant rhetoric) as a process that involves accepting the influx of middle and upper-middle-class white people. Like the discourse of diversity used in general development campaigns discussed in chapters two and three, Vince reinforces the idea that white people bring a needed balance. The logic behind this sentiment is taken as a universal, but there is not obvious argument for why all black spaces need white people to improve. Vince's comments also echo comments on the listserv discussed in the next chapter. He wants to be a part of the neighborhood and Wonderland allows him to feel a sense of belonging that Nob Hill prevented. In some ways, Vince's celebration of *the* neighborhood bar represents a queer battle in the larger territorial war in Columbia Heights. Even gay spaces need to be taken over. Racial diversity is allowed, but only if whites (in this case the white owners of Wonderland and its majority-white patrons) can be in control of what kinds of diversity enter.

Vince's comments illustrate the complexity of analyzing residents' comments about diversity, as language that seems to express acceptance of multiple identities can often validate some identities over others. Vince conceptualizes a space in which queers and their allies are all welcome in a fluid and accepting space. That space's history, however, reveals that power and exclusion have and continue to operate amidst the exciting fluidity.

Respondents of color such as Michael and Kyla told me that they felt out of place in the established gay bars in Dupont and Logan circles. This feeling of alienation,

though, was not solely based on prevalent racial segregation. I asked Michael why he did not go to bars like Halo (the upscale gay bar in Logan that caters to gay men) and he responded:

Well, I think the first thing that sort of turns me off is it's very racially segregated. And class segregated. And I guess I don't feel very comfortable in that particular position because there are certain markers that you have to be in order to really feel comfortable. I mean, when I'm with a group of friends it doesn't matter, but there is some sort of weird - I don't understand why in Halo or Mova [Halo's new name] people are in the downstairs and people are in the upstairs, that sort of thing.

In addition to being a space that attracts primarily white gay men, even the inside space of Halo/Mova is segregated. Within the bar, black patrons often seem to be relegated to separate floors. When Michael is with a critical mass of white friends he feels more comfortable, illustrating which patrons have marked the territory as their own.

Furthermore, Halo/Mova, like many of the city's gay clubs and bars, attracts a more upscale crowd. The potential for creating supportive queer social networks is quelled when the majority of these more-visibly gay spaces exclude LGBTQ people that do not exhibit the appropriate race and class markers.

Kyla stays away from Dupont and Logan circle for similar reasons. When I ask her why she chose to live in Columbia Heights as opposed to somewhere more traditionally known as a gay enclave, she explains that in Columbia Heights "I'm less of a visible anomaly which has been key in my life and the spaces that I choose to occupy... I mean I don't go out in those neighborhoods. I don't "go out" almost in general lately. But it feels very white to me. And has for almost ever." Even though Kyla is only in her early twenties, her comments reference the entrenched history of racial segregation that Beemyn writes about. The cultural memory of spaces among queers of color exists

beyond an individual's own experience, helping to map the city into spaces that are or are not receptive to LGBTQ people.

Kyla also recognizes that D.C. queer nightlife in general does not cater towards lesbians and queer women. "I feel like DC is very male," she says, "and since coming back I've had a pretty hard time tapping into women of color queer spaces. I find that I'll find radical lefty white women in Brookland [a neighborhood in Northeast DC] or Petworth [a neighborhood adjacent to Columbia Heights that is beginning to gentrify] or places that generally cost less money because they're anti-capitalist and work at low-wage jobs because of their anti-capitalism, blah blah blah." Kyla's observations mirror what Elsie Jay calls the "politics of 'in'difference." Jay argues that queer political legitimacy has too often been contingent on being "out" in gay enclaves and establishments. The privileging of these spaces excludes queer women and especially queer women of color who often do not traverse these spaces due to exclusion but also due to divergent family and community responsibilities.⁵² While the streets and bars of Dupont and Logan are raced and classed, the "radical lefty white women" do not seem that appealing either. Though she does not explicitly critique the latter spaces, her flippant descriptors imply that she is distrustful of their political zeal. Finding anti-racist, anti-capitalist queer spaces is important to Kyla, but she also wants to find networks that share rather than tokenize her social location.

Sherri tells me she does not go out much either. Even though she resents the stereotype of the lesbian "wifed up at home," she muses that she is often that lesbian. Beyond fitting in with lesbian cultural norms, part of the reason for her penchant for staying in is because of the segregation in LGBTQ bars and clubs:

It's segregated by race within the gay community in terms of socializing. You can just go to any place in Dupont and Logan and you're going to see that it's going to be completely segregated. There will be a couple of black people in there at any given one time. But it's like a couple of black people who came with friends or who only have white friends.

Sherri's humorous critique matches Michael's assessment exactly. Though these two individuals cannot stand in for the whole of black queer experience, it is telling that two strangers have pinpointed the exact contours of territory and belonging in the allegedly universally appealing gay bars and clubs in the city.

Sherri's quest for comfortable queer public space is complicated by her class as well. As an upper-middle-class lesbian of color, the identity markers that make her an outsider vary depending on the space. Sherri tells me that black queer spaces exist throughout the city, but explains:

so, here's the divide here that frustrates me. Because Theresa and I always feel like an anomaly like we don't fit anywhere.... With black folks in the black gay scene, it's actually very low-income. So it's all the people who have blue collar and it's people who are not necessarily college educated. It's a whole completely different culture. And we always ask ourselves, where are the gay professional black people?

Despite the social and economic power she wields as a professional, she has restricted access to upscale spaces. That social location, however, also prevents her from connecting with working class lesbians of color. There is a murky line between finding spaces that offer opportunities for social networking among people with similar social location and reinforcing hierarchies of difference. Beyond the politics of activating class privilege in a critique of racial marginalization, her discussion of these two spaces shows that each queer space maps a different combination of what markers of difference are privileged and which are marginalized.

Many of the respondents I spoke with conceptualized their desire to live in Columbia Heights as an act of resistance to the segregationist politics of Dupont and Logan. Their LGBTQ identity was still vital to their experience, but many cited their anti-racist politics as playing more of a role in deciding on where to live. Sherri says, “I was a young black person moving there, not a young gay person necessarily moving here. I moved here because it was a diverse community. I never wanted to live in an all-white community and liked that.”

Respondents such as Kyla and TJ shared a similar desire to be in less segregated spaces, but felt as though their politics prevented them from fully fitting into Columbia Heights either. The concerns they had about Dupont and Logan- the linkages between sexuality and gentrification- are things that trouble them when looking at Columbia Heights. In the neighborhood, Kyla believes “the biggest rift if not race is economics. Because the gay folks who come in are typically very economically well to do- double income, no kids- and that’s very alienating.” Kyla distances herself from those incoming gay residents, showing how class and racial difference create distinct queer subjectivities.

TJ, a light-skinned Latina, talks about the alienation she feels from both queer and Latina/o social milieus. When she goes to the queer dance parties Wonderland occasionally hosts, she tells me, “I don’t feel like one of those white kids, but I also don’t feel like I, since I don’t speak Spanish, I can’t really fit with Latino community.” She further distances herself from gay white men based on interactions she has had on the street. They “go out of their way” not to recognize her or talk to her. With “the yuppie or white gays or whatever definitely I’m like, I recognize you, I see you’re gay, you know? And I kind of don’t exist to them.” In those interactions, TJ reaches out to make an

ephemeral connection with neighbors based on shared sexual identification. Their denial of her engagement, whether because of her racial difference or androgynous/punk style that goes beyond the scope of assimilationist gay white male culture, undercuts what limited commonality they do have. TJ's subsequent distancing from the LGBTQ residents associated with gentrification also unhinges the ideological connection between gay sexuality and inequitable development.

Acknowledging that racial and class difference fragment the myth of a universal LGBTQ community is not novel. However, hearing how these respondents conceptualize that separation illustrates the motivations behind the distancing. Framing oneself as distinct from the white upper-middle-class gay men is an act of resistance to the popular gay-led gentrification narratives that carry such weight in the urban built environment. This narrative offers LGBTQ residents the chance to buy into the narrative for their own cultural and economic ascension. Instead of using their sexuality to associate themselves with the limited privilege that comes with being considered the gay gentry, Kyla and TJ define themselves as the inverse. This oppositional self-conceptualization has the potential to offer them some absolution for their role in gentrification, but it also works to disconnect queer sexuality with class privilege and inequitable development. In other words, by defining themselves as different than the DINKs they blame for gentrification, the ideological power of the gay-led gentrification narrative- a narrative used to justify inequitable development and reinforce hierarchies of difference- is potentially destabilized.

The success of this destabilization often relies on reception. How does one perform disidentification on the street? Part of how TJ distances herself is by presenting

herself in an androgynous style that bucks assimilationist gay cultural norms. Sometimes, though, politics are not accurately translated through one's self presentation:

I feel like being queer and being visibly queer and surrounding myself with a queer culture makes me feel that I'm not as awful as like, the white gay men or the yuppie. I don't know what to call them. The yuppie middle upper middle-class people. I don't know. I feel like I'm, I feel like it gives me some sort of perspective that I can still be against something that's happening. But probably or most likely, there's lots of people who look at me and see me as part of that. So it's like, the way that I position myself helps me feel better being here, but let's be honest. We're light skinned people in Columbia Heights. We're part of it.

TJ's comments reveal how politics are enacted as people move through space. In addition to the interactions and conversations people have on the street, bodies are also encoded with ideology. TJ wants her queerness to be visible and does so to illustrate her disassociation with normative structures. The end result, however, does not always leave this intention intact. By merely walking down the street as a light-skinned person, TJ acknowledges that her presence reinforces white territorialization so integral to the gentrification process. Her intention does not guarantee that she will be read as queer or oppositional to gentrification, but her desire to do so and the effort she put into trying to be more actively oppositional illustrates a resilient oppositional consciousness. This consciousness is not the final step, but is an important part of resisting the inequitable development that certain forms of LGBTQ sexuality reinforce.

Her concern is something I have also grappled with as a white gay man walking the streets of the neighborhood. Despite valuing Columbia Heights for its racial and class diversity and despite figuring ourselves as explicitly opposed to the politics of gay-led gentrification, we feel as though our face still gentrifies. We are seen as white newcomers and reinforce the wrong side of the territorial war. Developers and other white newcomers

alike interpolate us as the kind of residents that portend the current and continued upscaling of the neighborhood. We reinforce that process just by being there. Her partner Chris feels similarly. “It’s actually really important for me to live in a neighborhood that’s diverse,” he says. “And I also was feeling really torn about, like, being another light-skinned gentrifier in the neighborhood. So I haven’t really quite figured out how to mitigate the impact.” Chris not only acknowledges the nuanced politics of visibility, he is actively trying to find ways to stop the collateral damage they incur.

Kyla also worries about intention and action. Intention often gets lost in the day to day decisions residents make. For instance, she wonders how to reconcile her desire to live in an affordable urban area without contributing to the gentrification that occurs with the influx of educated queer newcomers:

I know a ton of low-income queer white folks who are moving into Petworth who are essentially doing the same thing but trying to negotiate that identity and how that works. When they’re very conscious of gentrification and issues with racism and classism and privilege but still need cheap rent... And that contributes just as much as anything else. The white faces contribute to the gentrification process as much or as little as people want to make of that. It is what it is.

Chris and Kyla do not provide any solutions for how to counteract the politics of their presence. Nor have I found a silver bullet that lessens the impact my body has on inequitable development in Columbia Heights. That Chris and Kyla wrestle with these issues, though, shows a cognizance of the multi-layered ways in which identity affects the landscape. Acknowledging these subtle moments offers the potential to counteract the celebratory narratives of diversity and gay-led gentrification that obscure power imbalances.

As an educated, upper middle-class gay white male, Joe has spent time reflecting on his role in the shifting neighborhood. He recollected an interaction he had with another white Columbia Heights resident upon moving into his apartment building. A friendly conversation quickly turned into an awkward interaction, as the white woman he talked to began to talk through her guilt, saying

‘I’ve lived here a long time and I think that having all of the stuff is really good for the neighborhood, and I kind of feel guilty but like, I’m a good neighbor right? I treat people well.’ It’s sort of like, it’s ok that businesses come in, have brought people to the neighborhood and increased the real estate values and forced people out, but it’s ok because I’m nice to the black community. She kept going and going and going. And I just bring that up because I think that it is sort of an interesting conundrum for newbies in the neighborhood. Especially those who go into it eyes wide open and have a social conscience about it. You know, your presence and your income and wary how you spend your money does have an impact on the people around you.

Joe’s anecdote alternately critiques the “I’m a different kind of white person” narrative seen throughout my interviews with residents while reinforcing its logic. Implicit in the story is that Joe has grappled with these issues more successfully than the guilty and rationalizing woman in the story. Joe argues that debilitating guilt is unproductive, but does not necessarily dismiss responsibility. Being aware of power dynamics in the neighborhood is vital. For Joe, residents should know the consequences of their economic and interpersonal investments, but drafting rationalizations based in guilt often falsely equates “being nice” with being ethical.

All of these comments complicate the idea that consciousness-raising is an end in and of itself. Being aware of power dynamics is a step towards destabilizing discourses of development that value some identities and bodies over others. Grasping how the obscured process works, however, does not necessarily change one’s impact. Firstly,

these stories trouble the idea that intention absolves an individual's spatial and economic moves. Focusing too much on the power of personal responsibility, however, ignores the power of entrenched neoliberal structures. Within the large-scale process of inequitable development, bodies are capital even if they are walking to an activist meeting, or to an interview with a scholar, or to a coffee shop to write an anti-gentrification dissertation. The concerns my respondents have illustrate the sheer power of the process, threatening as it does to commodify people's identity without their consent.

Seeing the Difference: Shared Space and Cross-identity Understanding

Though the narratives of diverse Columbia Heights can sound like a utopia of cross-cultural harmony, the reasons respondents enjoyed the neighborhood's demographic diversity were often far removed from language of utopia and harmony. Theresa wanted to live in Columbia Heights because she wanted to see "reality" reflected. This reality is often hard to acknowledge, but being forced to confront that reality drives her commitment to social justice. "I think that when you live in an area that is too one or the other, you're really missing out on people," she says. "You're really missing out on how we all learn from each other, and all of the good and the bad that's associated with. You can't just pretend other people don't exist by moving to a certain area and saying well everything is fine and wonderful." Dupont and Logan may be alluring, but part of the allure involves resting on one's privilege to escape rather than confront inequality.

As an upwardly mobile lesbian, Sherri agreed that she could in fact afford and prosper in Logan or Dupont. She would not want to live there, though. As she mentioned

earlier, part of her wariness stems from the racial segregation of the areas. Some of that segregation, though, could be counteracted by her class. However, “Logan and Dupont are like living in lala land. It’s like Liberty Avenue on *Queer as Folk*.” In Columbia Heights, she and Theresa do go out to some of the more upscale restaurants and shops, but cannot (and do not want to) avoid the reality of a widening wealth gap in the neighborhood:

And then on the way home we walk past 7-eleven. And we're like, wow. Yeah, that's why we do the work that we do. So you're reminded about the fact that there are people who feed their children hot dogs from 7-eleven for breakfast before, 1) probably because they can't afford to do much more than that, but - because they're rushing because they just got off one job to go to the next job and have to try to get this kid out of here in between this....I think if I was a lawyer that was working for corporations and completely detached from regular people on the ground, then Logan would be lovely. I would go to Bang and Olufsen [a luxury stereo store], I'd get my stereo set....Then I'd sit on my rooftop and like, sip champagne and think that oh the world is wonderful and Barack Obama's President.

Sherri admits that neighborhoods like Logan are appealing, but her facetious scenario illustrates the danger in putting one’s head in the sand. Her comment about president Obama references an increasingly mainstreamed post-race worldview. The joke, of course, is that she knows we are not living in a post-race world and that racism is alive and well in Washington D.C.

For Sherri, having the ability to be post-identity is an expensive luxury, but it is one that is for sale even to lesbians of color. By placing equality on the market, mobilization among those with marginalized markers of difference becomes even more of a challenge. Instead of intraracial coalition that could potentially come out of sharing space, upper middle-class residents of color can buy a limited amount of acceptance within segregated gay enclaves.

The mere spatial proximity between divergent groups does not ensure coalition for shared social justice. It does however increase the potential of that coalition far more than if people actively avoid marginalized groups. Similarly, using low-income residents of color to remind oneself about inequality can potentially be a form of tokenism or appropriation. Ultimately, though, I argue that these interactions do have potential to shape residents' conceptions. For the middle and upper-middle-class respondents I spoke with, living in close proximity with people of divergent backgrounds did seem to strengthen their critique of inequitable development.

Being in a demographically diverse space such as Columbia Heights also allows for cross-identity interactions that can encourage dialogue among different groups, challenged assumptions about each of these groups. Joe thinks his presence as a gay man in a neighborhood that is not traditionally known as a gay enclave presents a number of teachable moments for straight-identified people:

At the end of the day, the more that gay people are out in the world and amongst non-queer people it is a net benefit. Even among progressive straights who are totally friends of the gays. There's still a lot that can be done to move the ball forward especially if it's a question of moving them from an acceptance to advocacy on our behalf. So, there's always going to be a need for queer people to be out and visible even among really progressive straight communities.

Joe recognizes that, even among straight people who advocate for gay rights, there is always a need for LGBTQ people to control the message and advocate on their own behalf. The subjectivity of LGBTQ people needs to inform and educate straight allies' politics. Unlike assimilationist strategies that advocate the visibility of LGBTQ people to "prove" how respectable and normative they are, Joe's argument is more about being visible in order to be vocal and in control of the movement. This can help prevent pro-gay politics

from slipping into commodifiable abstraction. A straight person's affirmative stance on LGBTQ rights issues can be fashioned as cultural capital, showing that the person is progressive and educated. Interacting with LGBTQ people takes that affirmation out of abstraction and forces (or allows, depending on their willingness) people to talk, fight, look at each other awkwardly, or whatever other moment of contact is engendered. Often times this proximity allows LGBTQ people like Joe to assert his queerness and explain his politics and identity on his terms.

The possibility for different groups to form coalitions is often muddled when intraracial class issues arise. As evidenced by her comments about Logan Circle's falsely idyllic setting, Sherri does want to live in demographically diverse spaces. She adds, though, that:

It's frustrating for me as a black person to walk through a community with other black people and to see a lot of the consequences of systemic oppression. So systemic oppression is what it is, and we get that and we get economic disparity and lack of access to educational opportunities and all those things, but then I as a black person still can't justify why this woman is – this girl- is 14 or 15 with a baby in a stroller and another kid. But it's like oh, I'm an African American person and these are African American people, so to some degree I feel like a part of the community, but there's clearly this classist kind of divide where I'm not. Like, I'm not. And that to me is stressful and frustrating because it's like, wow. I clearly am drawing these lines of separation between who I am and who these people are. And you don't wanna do that within your community. Particularly when most people look like you.

Sherri acknowledges all of the arguments against blaming the victims of systemic oppression. She also understands that, as a black woman, she is in a unique position to advocate for the rights of black women who have less social and political clout than she. Sometimes, though, the difference between her experience and their experience results in distance and frustration. Does this recognition of how her privilege shapes her

displeasure help her fight systemic oppression? It remains to be seen. At the very least her awareness of race, class and oppression have been heightened by sharing space with low-income residents.

Theresa wants to see things that bother her. She figures her presence as a positive influence for low-income residents. Like Sherri, she gets frustrated seeing some of her low-income neighbors:

why is the same guy at the 7-eleven corner at 9:30 in the morning when I'm going to work, and he's still there at 5 o'clock? And I can say about a series of things, there's not opportunities, blah, blah, blah, noise. But I'm doing it. You know, so it's a lot of frustration. It's a lot of trying to understand people's experiences and how they get stuck, but then saying that - but are you really stuck? When you see people that look like you who have a place to go everyday. Do you ever think to yourself, I can do that too? So, it's frustrating. It's like, what's the word I'm looking for, it's by sheer presence of us, it's like trying to be a model. But needing to find a way to have direct contact in order to really be a model. Which is why I went into teaching. Which is why I wanted to teach specifically in DC in Columbia Heights, because I never had an African American teacher.

Theresa's desire to be a model for low-income blacks can be seen through the lens of Mary Patillo's formulation of intraracial class politics in her own ethnographic study.

"When members of the black bourgeoisie meet the truly disadvantaged," she writes, "the former hold two simultaneous convictions about their roles in the neighborhood: First, they intend to serve as both behavioral models and resource magnets to alter the environments of their less fortunate neighbors. Second, their efforts presume the superiority of their behaviors and resources."⁵³ Theresa views herself as more successful than her low-income neighbors, a positioning that involves a certain amount of patronization. But, because of her empathy as a black woman- she wants to use her status to help those people. Her comments reflect the complicated negotiation of systemic

oppression and personal responsibility. While she understands the circumstances of poverty, she still wants them to see her as an example that class ascension is possible.

Furthermore, Theresa believes that involvement needs to go beyond merely surrounding oneself with reminders of systemic oppression. Her work with community organizations catering to local youth of color has been an outlet for her to put her frustration to productive use. Kyla shares a focus on action. At one point she tells me, “I would like to see a lot more resistance. I heard late last year that between 2007 and the end of this year there were supposed to be something like 12,000 subsidized housing units lost in D.C. Resistance. We need to resist that.” Kyla pauses and adds, “but I say ‘we.’ I’m not living in that situation. It’s difficult to negotiate that.”

While resistance can be a cross-class effort, Kyla understands the danger in confusing coalition with shared social location. Her comments imply that middle and upper-middle-class people (especially people of color) need to be a part of the fight, but those affected by things like Section 8 expiration need to be in charge of the fight. The role of middle and upper-middle-class people of color is complicated to negotiate. There is an increased empathy for racism and classism, but boundaries and biases of class privilege need to be addressed. While the aforementioned reflections are not specifically about Sherri, Theresa, and Kyla’s sexuality, they speak to their multi-layered experience as queer women of color.

Clearly, the LGBQ respondents I spoke to all value diversity. Is that valuation, however, somehow different than appropriation of diversity rhetoric that is an integral part of selling the neoliberal neighborhood? TJ and Chris note that there is a thin line between praising Columbia Heights for its socio-economic diversity and a depoliticized

version of multicultural celebration. Chris thinks the neighborhood is moving towards the latter. “There’s going to be token gay people on this block and the token black family over there,” he predicts, “but overall I feel like it’s moving in the direction of being a lot like a suburb. TJ adds that “it’s still going to keep that really nasty ‘we are so into diversity’ thing.... I just keep thinking about those murals. It’s just like the mural of how much we love diversity.” The language TJ and Chris use to praise demographic diversity is similar to the language used in rhetoric that reinforces the separation of “diversity” and discussions of power. I argue, though, that their focus on the marginalization of working class people of color works to counteract the script of neoliberal multiculturalism by continually bringing up the complicated issues that still divide the neighborhood.

After hearing the reflections of these respondents, I argue that the LGBQ residents I talked with connect their own experience as marginalized people with other forms of marginalization based on race, ethnicity, and class. Even white gay respondents, such as Joe, tie his work for LGBT equity to the struggle of his working class neighbors. Marginalization varies based on which marker of difference is being targeted. As evidenced by Sherri and Theresa’s comments about some of their neighbors, LGBQ residents of color are not always wholly sympathetic to working-class concerns. In my ethnographic work throughout this project, though, my LGBQ respondents offered some of the most nuanced, intersectional reflections regarding how difference is negotiated in Columbia Heights.

Without viewing LGBQ residents as somehow inherently more insightful, I argue that LGBQ identification has potentially given my respondents a unique way of seeing Columbia Heights. Though most of them are newcomers, their reflections vary widely

from newcomers' reflections in chapter three. When I asked other newcomers why they had chosen Columbia Heights, more repeated the popular diversity rhetoric before proceeding to conversations about transition and crime. The LGBQ respondents I interviewed for this chapter were more apt to talk about difference in terms of marginalization and coalition: why it's important to disassociate from segregated spaces, why being with low-income people was valuable, why being a sexual minority among racial minorities was a better way to live.

Not all LGBQ respondents talked like this, both the LGBQ people I interviewed for this chapter and the previous one. Furthermore, not all newcomers discussed in chapter three ignored these issues. I do chart, however, a unique line of reasoning that was more prevalent in the interviews I conducted with LGBQ people. Ultimately, I suggest that inhabiting a marginalized social location has the *potential* to engender more critical dialogue about uneven development, whether because that person has faced racial, ethnic, sexuality, or class-based discrimination or any combination thereof.

Part of this distinct way of seeing Columbia Heights involves conceptualizing it as a space that brings together people that face multiple forms of marginalization. This conceptualization is not definitively different than neoliberal ideas about hip, diverse spaces. However, because discrimination is such a large portion of how LGBQ talk about diversity, their desire for a diverse space strays from the "new" Columbia Heights and its flattened difference. Theresa and Sherri's ruminations on queer youth of color and Joe's critique of other white newcomers is not part of the "vibrant," street scenes in advertisements.

Given LGBTQ respondents' desire to make their home in a demographically diverse neighborhood that goes beyond the supportive network of the traditional gay enclave, can this spatial formation be conceptualized as a new kind of queer space? "Queer space" is an amorphous term that has been invoked and debated among scholars since the 1990s. For Aaron Betsky, queer space is a "useless, amoral, and sensual space that lives only in and for experience."⁵⁴ For the editors of the anthology *Queers in Space*, it is "an expanding set of queer sites that function to destabilize heteronormative relations and thus provide more opportunities for homoerotic expression and related communality."⁵⁵ In these estimations, Columbia Heights is not a queer space. The ability to form anti-heteronormative sexual and social networks was not a descriptor any of my respondents referenced. Given the amount of gay-led gentrification narratives used in conceptualizing and marketing the neighborhood, Columbia Heights is arguably a consumer-oriented, homonormative space.

I invoke the notion of "queer space" to suggest that the spatial formation of Columbia Heights does do queer work. Like most terms coming out of the overwhelmingly white, male middle-class queer movement, queer space is useful as part and parcel of a larger political and social justice. Queering has always involved the questioning and subverting of dominant ideologies. Truly "queer" space needs to be a space of both non-normative desire and coalitional fraternizing, organizing, and resistance. Queer space has the potential to create what Judith Halberstam calls "queer counterpublics."⁵⁶ For my respondents, Columbia Heights has the potential to "queer" neoliberal ordering of difference, acknowledging and resisting the racism, classism, and homophobia built into urban landscape.

Kyla provides a useful conceptualization of queer space. “Legimitately queer spaces are different from LGBT spaces. To me, queer is about questioning the status quo rather than trying to buy into it... I think the city could benefit from... an established space that’s less classed and less racialized and more open and welcoming.” Though it is not perfect, Columbia Heights is the closest Kyla has gotten to that space. She feels as though she can express her queer sexuality, but also feels connected to other people of color, some of them working class.

LGBQ respondents’ decisions to move to Columbia Heights could be no different than newcomers entering a gentrified world built for the creative class, but there is potentially more interesting work being done here. Columbia Heights could be representative of a post-identity move away from understanding LGBQ identity as the basis for radical political action and community formation. Formulating Columbia Heights as a variant on “queer space” reflects LGBQ respondents’ desire to move beyond diversity rhetoric towards something that values difference through an active critique of its intersecting marginalizations. That focus on confrontation and not celebration brings the value of “queering” to mind.

My respondents advocated for a multi-identity based diversity that calls for a new understanding of sexuality as a node within a larger system rather than the primary oppression, dwarfing all claims of sexism, racism, and classism. Columbia Heights lacks the open same-sex displays of eroticism that are often more permissible in places such as Dupont and Logan circles. On the other hand, those spaces are less permissive of racial, gender, and class difference. While neither is acceptable, I make the comparison to illustrate that truly queer space has yet to be achieved on the neighborhood scale. But

Columbia Heights, with its complex intersections of difference, offers interesting possibilities and, at the very least, has just as much queerness as traditional gay enclaves.

The desire to live in a racially, ethnically, economically, and sexually diverse neighborhood like Columbia Heights opens up opportunities for residents to work together. Empathy, especially drawn from one's own experience of marginalization, can be a powerful motivator. It can lead residents to help each other receive the resources they deserve. I argue that the desire to form these spaces are meaningful and have the potential to form coalitions. Some of the interactions my respondents told me about illustrate what those coalitions can look like. It is Theresa convincing a longtime black resident that same sex marriage is an important issue. It is TJ and Chris's fight to scandalize homonormative residents on the streets.

Coalition is not a foregone conclusion. Often times racial and class hierarchies are reinforced. The segregated maps of Columbia Heights continue to be reinforced. People still ignore one another. LGBTQ people such as Vince patronize "mixed" bars like Wonderland and choose a diversity of sexuality over racial and class diversity. Despite her efforts educating low-income children, Theresa still expresses disappointment at low-income residents' choices. The desire to fight segregation is valuable and so are the coalitions diverse spaces engender. Beyond this, though, interactions between residents- whether personable or tense- still destabilize the ideology of the uptopic, multicultural Columbia Heights used to sell inequitable development.

Conclusion: Layered Violence and Forced Contact

Regardless of what theoretical term appropriately captures the character of the neighborhood, one thing remains. Columbia Heights is a space where multiple identities and markers of difference mingle on its streets in everyday interactions. Often time these street level interactions reinforce reductive identity scripts. Bodies are coded with perceived race, class, and sexuality. “We get harassed all the time by men,” Sherri tells me. “It’s just really getting old. And I won’t say it’s harassment, it’s just the cackling and the shouting out and the whistling and that kind of thing. But it’s just really derogatory. And part of me is like, yeah we live in the same community but I’m not on your level, so why would I ever respond to that?” In those moments, Sherri resents that she is coded as a working-class heterosexual. As a black woman in Columbia Heights, people assume certain things about her.

While Sherri has addressed the problematics of separating herself from working class residents, she remains frustrated not only by the harassment but by the assumptions behind the harassment. In moments like these, identity assumptions (i.e. in Columbia Heights black means heterosexual and working class) are reinforced and hierarchies are further entrenched (i.e. middle-class people should not have to be treated like working class people.) Ephemeral interactions between strangers can also have the opposite effect, as evidenced by Theresa’s experience advocating for marriage equality. Theresa’s experience provided an opportunity for assumptions about race, class, and sexuality to be complicated by an understanding of intersectional difference.

Another form of street-level interaction in Columbia Heights involves violence, as the neighborhood has its share of muggings and gang-related violence. When discussing

sexuality and violence, scholars often turn to debates about “safe space.” Violence is framed as a disciplining function of heteronormative culture. As Beverly Skeggs and Leslie Moran argue, “homophobic violence is a violence for the social order not a violence of social disorder.”⁵⁷ Dora Epstein similarly illustrates how lesbian sexuality and gender are both punished through the creation of “city fear,” “a spatialized signification of power” that marks the city as unsafe for those who transgress its heterosexist and patriarchal boundaries. She notes that even the creation of “safe space” implies that the rest of the city is unsafe and off limits.⁵⁸ Epstein’s account of safety and the urban built environment offers insight into how identity and space are ordered, yet she fails to account for race. In Epstein’s example, for instance, she fails to race the urban men that instill fear on city streets. When does the assumption of violence become the racist profiling of men of color?

Christina Hanhardt’s recent examination of safety rhetoric in the gay enclave of New York’s Christopher Street has critiqued the rhetoric of safe space used to commit violence against people of color.⁵⁹ All of these contributions to literature about safety pave the way for a discussion about urban violence that acknowledges how all markers of difference factor into acts of violence. Violence directed against LGBTQ residents of Columbia Heights cannot be solely understood as violence related to sexuality. Anti-queer violence continues to be a problem in Washington D.C. generally and in Columbia Heights specifically. In Columbia Heights, these acts of violence need to be discussed in concert with classed and racialized violence.

Because of the (however temporary) diversity of Columbia Heights, residents with different social locations constantly move amongst one another within a dense

space. Despite the segregation of certain buildings and establishments, there is still a lot of contact. Sometimes that contact is friendly and helps people understand one another. Forced contact, in the form of fighting, friction, and violence, can also destabilize the ideology of multicultural utopia. This friction is seemingly at the opposite end of the interactional spectrum from coalitions. However, it is still contact. It is more productive of meaning than ignoring one another. Ignoring other groups and following along the routes of one's own map of Columbia Heights produces meaning. Ignoring other people creates resentment and reinforces who has worth and who has power. Actual contact, however, offers more of a chance to interact.

In the case of friendly contact, this interaction can lead to insightful discussion. Adversarial contact is productive as well. It is often a way to resist and oppose. It is an opportunity to fight back. Mugging a newcomer, rolling one's eyes at a yuppie, and being loud at a bus stop all claim space from people perceived to be stealing it. I am not advocating violence or abuse, but this section examines what these moments do. I argue that they are part of the war against uneven development and, despite their casualties, I argue that they need to be recognized as legitimate political acts of resistance.

Examining violence and other forms of aggressive contact further illustrates how intersecting difference affects interactions. The stories my respondents told me challenge concepts like "safe space" "property crimes" and "hate crimes." Moments of violence, I argue, are often about all these things and more. Only after viewing them with attention to sexuality *and* race, ethnicity, and class can their motives and meanings be unpacked. To conclude, I discuss some of these interactions. This analysis is just the beginning of a hopefully sustained trend in scholarship on urban violence that examines multiple

positionalities simultaneously. Safe space is valuable, but the goal needs to be expanded beyond protecting LGBTQ people. Safe spaces should also be spaces free from disinvestment, exploitation, discrimination, and class warfare.

Violence also has to be expanded to include not only the actions of muggers and individual assaulters, but the police as well. Michael points out the constant bright lights that mobile police units shine into the housing projects near his house. “I appreciate them as a person,” he says, “but at the same time, if I lived there it’s kind of... it’s almost like you’re guilty before you’re... so I kind of feel sad about that aspect of it.” As a middle-class black person, Michael sees how his class status prevents him from being the victim of certain kinds of state violence. Thomas worries that the widening gap between poor and wealthy residents will reach a “tipping point” leading to another civil uprising. Though he is similarly shielded from violence committed against working class residents, he acknowledges that he could also be the target of classed violence precisely because of his privilege.

Kyla, on the other hand, has been the victim of racist police actions. She recalls times when police officers have been friendlier to her white housemates or have eyed her with suspicion. It is her race not her queer sexuality that invites the most violence. “I’ve gotten looks on the street when I’ve been, like, holding hands with people,” she explains. “But nothing really beyond that.” What she finds more “terrifying,” is the “hyper criminalization of folks of color.” A discussion of violence and sexuality cannot exist in a vacuum. Privileging violence against queers not only denies the role intersecting markers of difference play in the enactment of violence, it also frames crimes against people of color and low-income people as somehow less worth critiquing. The demographic

multiplicity of Columbia Heights offers an example that refuses to be reduced to an analysis of violence against just queers or just women or just people of color.

Some of the LGBTQ residents I spoke to were the victims of violence. Thomas has had his car and house broken into and vandalized. He does not, however, see these as crimes related to his sexuality. Instead, he sees them more as a “‘get out of our neighborhood’ sort of thing.” TJ tells a similar story about a gay friend who was mugged. She said the men who witnessed the crime said “it wasn’t really a hate crime. They just wanted his iPod and came up from behind him.” The incident cannot, however, be solely framed as a property crime. TJ acknowledges that the victim “is pretty gay from the back too.” Just as violence against LGBTQ people is not solely about sexuality, neither are property crimes solely about property. The victim’s perceived sexuality and effeminacy most likely made him a target. In addition to activating assumptions about his weakness and punishable non-normativity, his presence as a gay person in Columbia Heights most likely conjured ideas about his class status. Following the assumption that all gay men in Columbia Heights are part of the gentry, his classed sexuality marked him for violence.

I am not arguing that violence against queers is overstated. It exists and is prevalent, but these acts of violence are inextricable from issues of race and class especially in the gentrifying city. Chris recognizes this all too well:

known some folks who have just- particularly white men- who’ve just been jumped for the sake of getting jumped by people of color... and my “I know better” anti-racist politic almost doesn’t want to admit that because it plays into a larger stereotype that white people should be afraid of people of color. And then there’s this really real fact that friends of mine are getting jumped in this neighborhood by young black men... and then I think you layer on homophobia on that, there’s another layer of violence.

Chris's reflections illustrate the danger of examining violence through any one lens of difference. Crimes perpetrated by young men of color against white men are about race, class, and the claiming of space in a violently gentrifying neighborhood. They are also crimes that prey upon queer sexualities. The "layers of violence" in Columbia Heights show just how reductive discussions of "safe space" can be. In a city where newcomers invoke black homophobia to justify racism or longtime black residents invoke homophobia to justify anti-racism, actions are never separated solely into pro- or anti-queer columns.

The threat of violence on the street is influenced by numerous identity-related power dynamics. A mugging can be about race, sexuality, and class. Low-income people steal things from middle and upper-middle class people who are perceived to have things to steal. Resentment about gentrification can fuel these property crimes, making them partially about a perceived redistribution of wealth. Race relations affect violence, both marking white people as targets and marking people of color as dangerous threats. Homophobia influences which people deserve to be mugged or beaten. The context of homophobia can also be used to justify policing people based on race and class.

The violence respondents spoke of challenges the comprehensiveness of "hate crime" policies. These policies were, in theory, created to deter people from abusing people on the basis of identity and to punish people because of their specific motivation to terrorize people because of their identity. Janer R. Jakobsen and Anne Pellgrini argue that one of the by-products of hate crime legislation is that condemning extreme cases of homophobic violence allows more quotidian examples of anti-gay violence to continue. Punishing the extreme examples helps absolve people's complicity in promoting

homophobic laws, culture, and interpersonal relations.⁶⁰ If you did not physically beat or murder an LGBT person than you are not homophobic.

On a more basic level, the classification of hate crimes ignores the multitude of reasons people commit violence. TJ and Chris's friend, for instance, was mugged and thus that becomes a property crime in the eyes of the police. His sexuality, though, quite possibly made him a target. Just because no one yells "fag" as they mug someone or yells a racial or ethnic slur when they threaten a person does not mean that racism, classism, and homophobia is not behind the perpetrator's motives.

Hate crime statistics both reveal and obscure occurrences of violence against LGBTQ people. The Washington D.C. police department reported that, in the third police district that includes Columbia Heights, there were ten and eight hate crimes reported in 2008 and 2009, respectively.⁶¹ The statistics do reveal that concerns about violence against LGBTQ people in spaces occupied by a larger concentration of LGBTQ people are founded. 70% of sexual orientation-related hate crimes were in the first, second, and third police districts: districts that are assumed to have the highest number of LGBTQ residents.⁶² However, these statistics do not reflect the subtle ways in which identity influences violence. For instance, in 2009 in the third police district there were 840 reported robberies and 443 aggravated assaults.⁶³ Surely more than 8 of those incidences were related to race- and/or sexuality-based violence.

There is no singular victim in these moments of violence. This is not to say that those who are mugged or beaten somehow deserve it, nor is it to say that the trauma they are faced with is not a serious concern. What I argue, based on my respondents' reflections, is that violence and safety needs to be placed in larger contexts of

homophobic violence and class-based violence and racially motivated violence and the violence of inequitable development, generally. In other words, there are multiple victims and each person that is victimized may simultaneously be complicit in another act of violence.

Elijah Anderson, in his largely ethnographic analysis of violence in urban areas, illustrates how identity and stereotyping is linked to people's assessment of threats. He argues for a more thoughtful approach to keeping safe on city streets. He advocates for "street wisdom," a negotiation of safety using "selective and individualized responses" to particular situations.⁶⁴ In other words, to avoid reinforcing oppressive stereotypes by assuming all black men are threats, savvy urban residents know to look for more palpable signifiers of danger: people following you, people behaving suspiciously, etc. His study is implicitly focused on white and/or middle and upper-middle residents. This limits the reach of his intervention, but illustrates the unique power relations activated and reinforced in cross-class and/or interracial interactions.

Anderson unpacks the way identities affect how people move through space, but his argument still encourages stereotyping just better stereotyping. While he points out that all people stereotype in their split-second assessments of safety, I argue that encouraging any kind of stereotyping reinforces hierarchies of difference. What constitutes suspicious behavior? If a black man looks poor and thus in need of money, does this justify running away or conceptualizing him as a menace? While a conversation about violence offers new opportunities to unpack how racist, classist, and homophobic assumptions reinforce hierarchies, there is no simple way to avoid these assumptions. As Anderson argues, in the split second assessments that order people's movements,

stereotyping is almost second nature. Rather than trying to advance a theory that would “solve” the use of identity assumptions in street interactions, I instead focus on safety as a concept that highlights how intertwined identity, power, and space are.

Though being surrounded by multiple forms of demographic diversity offers interesting potential, aforementioned examples of violence illustrate the tension that it can also bring. To close, I revisit the productivity of “contact” in the urban built environment. Contact in Columbia Heights often looks far different than the harmonious celebration forwarded by rhetorics of multiculturalism. TJ laments seeing how people interact with one another. At Starbucks she watches “these fucking white yuppie people with their two year old just bossing [the workers] around and being so entitled.” Race, class, and heteronormative privilege often make contact unpleasant and violent.

Chris believes that the diversity of the neighborhood itself is a fluke of a stalled real estate market. He feels that the city and developers are engaged in “an effort to move people out faster. I don’t even think D.C. pretends to try and keep people here.... I think it’s because the economy hit so hard in the middle of it that they just had to stop. And so I feel like there’s this tension that TJ was mentioning. Like, people were supposed to leave. So everyone’s stuck here with this tension. And it’s just waiting until the economy picks up and they finish putting everyone out.” Chris’s comments show that contact is not always born out of idealistic ideas of community and coalition. It can be forced contact.

Even in Chris’s dystopian take on the status of the neighborhood, contact still offers productive possibilities. As a queer person who often “flaunts” his queerness to upset the hetero-norm, he understands that people of color in the neighborhood often do the same thing to upset the incoming middle and upper-middle-class white residents. This

connection not only speaks to the importance of interaction in resisting marginalization, it also ties the assertion of queerness with the assertion of marginalized race and class.

The violence and confrontation born out of forced contact may not look like progressive work. But in the neoliberal landscape where city officials, developers, and some residents use rhetoric to erase continued marginalization, this day-to-day contact helps remind residents of the one thing that threatens the neoliberal order. Forced contact makes it hard to erase difference and the material reality of inequitable development. In Columbia Heights, difference cannot be erased. Black people will be on the street socializing every morning. LGBTQ residents will be in spaces that have not been designated as specifically gay and “safe,” like the bars of Logan and Dupont. As people move through Columbia Heights, they serve as reminders that markers of difference exist, they intersect, and some wield more power than others. In that sense, Columbia Heights offers a potential space- whether borne from confrontation or a moment in which queerness is unmoored from gentrification- where urban residents necessarily address the links between race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Notes

¹ My use of the term “queer space” is meant as a designation of an area with a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or otherwise non-heterosexual presence or feel. The nuances of “queer space” will be explored in more depth later in the chapter.

² Tamar Rothenberg, ““And She Told Two Friends’: Lesbians Creating Urban Social Space,” in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexuality* edited by David Bell and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995), 150-165.

³ Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 50.

⁴ My focus on LGBTQ residents was a point of contention for Chris, who was partnered with a trans-identified man whom I also interviewed. When I corrected TJ that I was primarily focusing on LGBTQ residents and not transgender I was frazzled and caught off guard. I tried to explain that I wanted to respect trans experience as a different experience that would require a different orientation towards thinking gender and sexuality. I was upset that TJ was implying that I was banning trans respondents out right (“So you don’t want to talk to Chris,” TJ sarcastically asked) and that I was not including transgender respondents because I thought they were different in a pejorative way. The latter implication was especially frustrating given that my reasons for not including trans experience was precisely because I did not want to misrepresent that experience by shoddily discussing it as an afterthought. Ultimately, though, the confrontation highlighted holes in my methodological logic. It would have required a different intersectional lens, but if I’m willing to do true intersectional analysis, why not include trans identity in with gender, race, class, ethnicity, and all the intertwined identifications I have encouraged throughout this research process? Not wanting to do the job because you won’t be able to do a thorough job is only so much of an excuse. Additionally, the end result- not representing trans experience- has a similarly exclusionary result.

⁵ Amin Ghaziani, “There Goes the Gayborhood?” *Contexts* 9, 4 (2010): 65.

⁶ Amin Ghaziani, “There Goes the Gayborhood?,” 64.

⁷ Manuel Castells, “Cultural Identity, Sexual Liberation and Urban Structure: The Gay Community in San Francisco” in *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory*, edited by Manuel Castells and Ida Susser (Boston: Blackwell, 2002), 180-230.

⁸ John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁹ Lawrence, Knopp, “Gentrification and Gay Neighborhood Formation in New

Orleans” in *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, edited by Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997), 45-64.

¹⁰ Benjamin Forest, “West Hollywood as Symbol: The Significance of Place in the Construction of Gay Identity,” *Society and Space* 13 (1995): 133.

¹¹ Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost’s *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* tries to formalize the study of gay spatial formations. Using census data for households with two non-married, same-sex partners, they chart general areas. This kind of project is an innovative way to manipulate data collection that has historically erased or marginalized LGBT demographics and behavior. However, the data is limited only to gay and lesbian cohabitating couples not to mention the straight couples that the designation includes. Thus, the methodology is limited given its inability to chart single and non-cohabitating LGBTQ people. Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost, *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute of Washington, D.C., 2004).

¹² Anne-Marie Bouthillette, “Queer and Gendered Housing: A Tale of Two Neighbourhoods in Vancouver,” in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, edited by Gordon Bren Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 213-232.

¹³ Charles Nero, “Why Are the Gay Ghettos White?” in *Black Queer Studies*, edited by E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham: Duke U P, 2005), 228-248.

¹⁴ Martin Manalansan, “Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City,” *Social Text* 84-85 (2005): 141-155.

¹⁵ Judith Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgendered Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Moira Rachel Kenney, *Mapping Gay LA: The Intersection of Place and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 5, 1.

¹⁷ See *Will and Grace*, “East Side Story,” episode 6.11, first broadcast March 11, 2004 by NBC, directed by James Burrows; “Flip Flop,” episode 6.15, first broadcast Feb. 26, 2004 by NBC, directed by James Burrows; “The Newlydreads,” episode 7.06. First broadcast Oct. 21, 2004 by NBC, directed by James Burrows.

¹⁸ These issues are explored in media such as the documentary *Flag Wars* and the film *Quincenera*. Both films present complex issues surrounding race, sexuality, and class. Both, however, tend to build more empathy into the plight of residents of color. In each film, white gay gentrifiers are shown engaging in various acts of economic (in addition to sexual in the case of *Quincenera*) exploitation. *Flag Wars*, directed by Linda Goode Bryant and Laura Poitras (Zeitgeist Films, 2007); *Quincenera*, directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland (Cinetic Media, 2006).

¹⁹ Manalansan notes that, through the use of “we” language, the advertising denies low-income residents of color a place within queer history and spaces. Martin Manalansan, “Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City,” 151.

²⁰ Karen Tongson, *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries*, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 22 (forthcoming).

²¹ Karen Tongson, *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries*, 13 (forthcoming).

²² Discussions of LGBTQ urbanity is not exclusively about white and middle and upper-middle class people. Though recent gay enclaves have reflected whiteness and upper-class status, discussions of queer urbanity have taken up low-income people of color. From the popularity of *Paris is Burning*, to George Chauncey’s study of working-class (but devastatingly stylish) gender inverts, working-class urbanity has been a part of the larger metronormativity. The resourcefulness and glamour of working class queers and/or queers of color is part and parcel of the narrative: from out of nothing, something fabulous; from oppression to scathing wit and style. While this narrative activates an optimistic narrative aimed at supporting queer people’s desires and talents, it can also be used to gain cultural capital and superiority. *Paris is Burning*, directed by Jennie Livingston (Miramax, 1991); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1995).

²³ Lawrence Knopp, “Gentrification and Gay Neighborhood Formation in New Orleans,” 56.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

²⁵ David Freund, *Colored Property*.

²⁶ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 139.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

²⁸ Richard Florida, *Flight of the Creative Class: The New Global Competition for Talent* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

²⁹ Gary J. Gates, Jason Ost, and Elizabeth Birch, *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas*, 3.

³⁰ Jim Graham’s comments at the D.C. Council public hearing, held October 26, 2009. Council of the District of Columbia, *Legislative Meeting, Oct. 26, 2009*, <http://www.dccouncil.us/granicusvideolegislativemeetings> (accessed 8/22/10).

³¹ *Washington Blade*, “Highland Park,” Advertisement, Nov 11, 2006, 73; *Washington Blade*, “Kenyon Square,” Advertisement, Sept. 29, 2006, 21.

³² Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*, 101.

³³ Duggan, *Twilight of Equality*, 50.

³⁴ John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Sexuality Identity” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharan Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 100-113.

³⁵ Ann Pellegrini, “Consuming Lifestyles: Commodity Capitalism and Transformations in Gay Identity” in *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*, edited by Martin Manalansan and Arnaldo Cruz-Malave (New York: New York UP, 2002), 135.

³⁶ Ann Pellegrini, “Consuming Lifestyles: Commodity Capitalism and Transformations in Gay Identity,” 135.

³⁷ Michael Warner, *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 190.

³⁸ This presumption of safety is largely just a presumption. In reality, more visibly gay enclaves can serve as a more visible target for violence.

³⁹ Ian Shapira, “Come Out, Then Branch Out,” *Washington Post*, March 15, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/14/AR2009031401936.html> (accessed 10/13/10).

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Kennedy Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Penguin, 1994); George Chauncey, *Gay New York*; John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁴¹ Council of the District of Columbia, *Legislative Meeting, Nov. 2, 2009*, <http://www.dccouncil.us/granicusvideolegislativemeetings> (accessed 8/22/10).

⁴² Council of the District of Columbia, *Legislative Meeting, Nov. 2, 2009*, <http://www.dccouncil.us/granicusvideolegislativemeetings> (accessed 8/22/10).

⁴³ Queerty, May 5, 2009, <http://www.queerty.com/marion-barry-black-community-wont-stand-for-gay-marriage-20090505/#ixzz0sRcTYiw0> (accessed 10/13/10)

⁴⁴ Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 45.

⁴⁵ Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

⁴⁶ The HRC’s disproportionate focus on marriage equality and military service has been used as the pinnacle of homonormative politics. Duggan, *Twilight of Equality*; Craig Rimmerman, *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2002).

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- ⁴⁷ See Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Penguin, 1992).
- ⁴⁸ Nero, "Why Are the Gay Ghettos White?," 243.
- ⁴⁹ Christina Hanhardt, "Butterflies, Whistles and Fists: Gay Safe Streets Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto, 1976-1981," *Radical History Review* 100 (2008): 70.
- ⁵⁰ Brett Beemyn, ed., *Creating A Place For Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 188.
- ⁵¹ Mark Meinke, "The Social Geography of Washington D.C.'s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Community" (paper presented at the annual meeting for Washington D.C. Historical Studies, Washington, D.C., October 19, 2002). Frank Muzzy, *Gay and Lesbian Washington, D.C.* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2005).
- ⁵² Elsie Jay, "Domestic Dykes: The Politics of 'In-difference,'" in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, edited by Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 163-170.
- ⁵³ Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block*, 99.
- ⁵⁴ Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow, 1997), 6.
- ⁵⁵ Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, "Strategies for (Re)constructing Queer Communities," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, edited by Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 449.
- ⁵⁶ Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 6.
- ⁵⁷ Leslie Moran and Beverly Skeggs, *Sexuality and the Politics of Violence* (London: Routledge, 2003), 12.
- ⁵⁸ Dora Epstein, "Afraid/Not: Psychoanalytic Directions for an Insurgent Planning History," in *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History*, edited by Leonie Sandercock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 221.
- ⁵⁹ Christina Hanhardt, "Butterflies, Whistles and Fists: Gay Safe Streets Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto, 1976-1981," 61-85.
- ⁶⁰ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 63.

⁶¹ Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, D.C., *Bias Related Crime in the District of Columbia* (Washington, D.C.: Government of the District of Columbia, 2010), 4. For third district area, see Appendix B.

⁶² Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, D.C., *Bias Related Crime in the District of Columbia*, 4.

⁶³ Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, D.C. “Crime Statistics”
http://mpdc.dc.gov/mpdc/cwp/view,a,1239,q,544953,mpdcNav_GID,1536.asp (accessed 3/1/11).

⁶⁴ Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

CHAPTER FIVE VIGNETTE

I am arriving back in Columbia Heights after a summer spending time with friends and family in my hometown in Massachusetts. When we pass the city borders, my friend, neighbor, and colleague asks me how it feels to be back. I have been writing this document all summer, removed from the site on which I'm writing. All I can ask is how many more college or recent post-college students have since moved here. A lot, he tells me. I feel sad and frustrated, sharing this neighborhood with so many people that just don't seem to care about the larger issues feeding into the "rise" of the neighborhood.

He is driving me back into my last year of graduate school. It could be my last year here in the neighborhood and in the city generally. I am just as transient as every other newcomer coming into the city for a brief backdrop to the internship-lifestyle of class aspirational twenty and early thirtysomethings. The mere fact that I am returning from a summer in Boston illustrates that I do not think of Washington, DC as my "home." I am between homes. All the dissertations and voting ballots in the world can't counteract that. I am temporarily loyal. When I settle down, it will most likely not be Columbia Heights. A lot of these reasons are pragmatic and life-choice based: I will go where jobs are, where families are, where partners are. For now though, like many other young professionals in the area, I toe the line between "transience" and "belonging." My investments in the community are not rooted in property or shared history. As much as I enjoy Columbia Heights and some of the residents here, I know that my emotional (and financial) investment in the area pales in comparison to residents who have been calling the neighborhood their home- through thick and thin- for decades. This is not a

difference-blind world in which my words of social justice are just as strong and valuable as community leaders and longtime residents. My location matters.

I've been wondering if I should move out of Columbia Heights. As a white middle-class educated queer man, I worry what my presence does for a neighborhood in transition. Columbia Heights seems to be reaching a critical mass. And I do not want to contribute to that critical mass. Is it better to be in a neighborhood that's already been gentrified? Is it better to be absent from the equation, residing in a space that's already been claimed by the gentry? Is it better to disengage, or to fight to belong knowing that "belonging" often involves the justification of your place in the built environment?

Time and again, I am confronted with the retort that you can't tell people where they can and can't live. Doesn't everyone have the right to feel at home in their neighborhood? And it's not as though I am standing idly by. Much like many other newcomers, I go to neighborhood meetings. I vote in local elections. I support initiatives for full representation for DC. This fierce loyalty, however, has often been taken up in service of claiming territory. In a landscape where the rhetoric of justice and belonging can be appropriated so easily in service of inequitable development, disengaging from the front lines as a conscientious objector seems like a viable alternative to being a poster child for Progressive Whites Who Deserve to Be Here. Calling this thought process White Guilt and pressing forward does not give justice to the pragmatic concerns I have about what individual actions create the most positive or negative reactions. My concern for how I frame and speak my message far outweighs any need to be absolved for my complicity in these environmental systems.

I have another colleague who is also interviewing people for a project on race. She told me about one of her white respondents who came of age in the 1960s. The respondent was invested in civil rights, but was constantly frustrated being tied to a physical appearance tied up with so much racism. She said she wanted to wear a sign that asserted that she cared; that she was not that kind of white person. I do not want to wear a sign that says I am the good kind of white person. Because that sign doesn't erase my face. And my face, as it travels the streets of my neighborhood, signals to everyone the future of Columbia Heights.

Some may see this as a validation of what they hope for. White neighbors disproportionately nod and smile when they pass me. They rarely do so when passing their black and Latina/o neighbors. I will nod in their general direction, but the brief urban connection that should make me feel closer to my neighbors leaves me implicated. I am not just interpolated as someone *like* them, a white soldier in the territorial war for Columbia Heights. I *am* a white soldier for the territorial war. I give thousands of dollars a year to a landlord who makes references to stocking his properties with "people like me." I go to de facto segregated bars that serve as the jewels to Columbia Heights' new luxurious crown.

My black neighbors have a right to dislike me. I do not try extra hard to say hello. I do not pepper my interactions with workers of color with enthusiastic "thank you"s. I am not going to make up for systemic marginalization with a generous tip. I know from my interviews that my neighbors of color do not all conceptualize me as the enemy. This snap judgment is not usually the whole story. I also accept, and understand the potential wariness that float past visages who have seen inequality at the hands of us oh, pioneers!

CHAPTER FIVE

‘SITES’ OF CONTENTION: THE CONSTRUCTION OF BELONGING AND DIFFERENCE ON THE COLUMBIA HEIGHTS LISTSERV

In February, 2005, Heather let everyone on the Columbia Heights listserv know that “there are various things I miss about [Columbia Heights], but one of them is definitely not El Rinconcito.” Entering the days-long argument about a local Mexican/Salvadorian restaurant, Heather continued to explicate the restaurant’s violations:

I found the owner to be inconsiderate of the neighbors and disingenuous in her promises to be a better neighbor.... In any case, I am loving small-town life and am thrilled that I no longer have to listen to the restaurant's bad Latino pop music first thing every morning. Nor do I miss the bad behavior of her patrons.¹

Robert responded to Heather almost immediately, continuing a chain of listserv posts that grew to over a dozen. “As a Latino, I am troubled by the villainization of El Rinconcito. Let's analyze some of your complaints,” he wrote. “They play loud, bad Latin music....The Wonderland also plays loud music.... Some of us LIKE Latin music. The people that hang out there are violent. No, the people that hang out there are Latino. The vast majority of them are law abiding citizens.” Angela echoed a similar sentiment, assuring detractors that neighbors are “optimistic and eager to assist [El Reconcito’s owner].”

Robert’s corrective, as is often the case in listserv discussion, was itself corrected, with Heather arguing that, “some of us like latin music, but I don't, and I certainly don't want to listen to ANY establishment's music, regardless of what that music is, at 10 a.m. on a Sunday. Or Monday. Or Tuesday.”

After reading Heather's and other posters' responses complaining about the restaurant's problems with patron misbehavior and cleanliness, Kristina drew out the subtext she read in the posts. She wrote, "reading all of these emails about this restaurant... Both of you... are straight racist. Period. You are simply prejudice and uncomfortable, and you're implementing this frame of mind by trying to push this Latino woman and her restaurant out of CH....I know what I'm dealing with now regarding the Gentrification League." It is closed with her first name and the signoff "An African American Columbia Heights Homeowner...who is NOT selling."

Heather and Tom, another poster Kristina referenced, directly engaged her accusation. "I don't appreciate being called a racist," she said. "Pot calling the kettle black, if you ask me, because the 'gentrification league' you referred to is hardly a monolithic group of white folks." Tom took a less restrained approach, retorting, "where the fuck do you see that I'm a racist? If I'm a racist, I'm livin' in Alabama, not here.... I could also tell you that I was married once upon a time to a Latino woman, but that wouldn't change your mind, either." The discussion continued on for a few days. Soon it was subsumed by another neighborhood matter and took its place in the listserv's archive, a reminder of the tension, commiseration, and belonging forged and fought about in a virtual "space" very much tied to the material spaces of Columbia Heights.

This discussion reveals that the Columbia Heights online listserv is a prolific and multifaceted meaning-making project. Amidst home improvement advice, restaurant reviews, and discussion of neighborhood events, posters construct tenuous definitions of what Columbia Heights is and who belongs there.² The conversation about El Reconcito, representative of numerous other threads on the listserv, illustrates that this construction

is tied to explicit and implicit conversations about race, ethnicity, and class. Heather's critique of the restaurant and its "Latino music" hinge on constructions of deviant ethnicity, while Robert's post points out and counters Heather's negative association. Kristina makes a small-scale conversation about a restaurant into a larger conversation that ties together neighborhood development, race, ethnicity, and class, while Tom takes the opportunity to deny personal racism.

All of these rhetorical maneuvers use difference to forward a particular vision of what the neighborhood should be and who should be there. This chapter examines what kind of difference is valued or marginalized on the listserv and in what context. As seen in the battle over El Reconcito's livelihood, belonging and difference are the rhetorical constructs that affect development, policing, and spatial rights among people claiming to be a part of Columbia Heights. That rhetoric can embrace someone as a neighbor worthy of equitable resources, but it can also help push that neighbor out of the consciousness, space, and economy of the neighborhood.

Incoming residents on the listserv marked specific people and places as worthy of public and private support. Conversely, it marked specific people and places as the appropriate target for policing and displacement. El Rinconcito was one such place. What, on the surface, looks like a common debate about noise and permits is actually part of a larger project that aimed to denigrate low-income residents of color. This campaign was not uncontested, but it did have devastating results. Listserv posts led to newcomers policing people of color, chasing after suspected criminals. They led to increased policing of public housing residents seen as a threat.

It also more subtly changed the neighborhood by denying structural racism and

classism that promoted uneven development. It made incoming white, middle and upper-middle class residents feel entitled to live in and own Columbia Heights. By manufacturing a sense of belonging on the listserv, incoming residents were able to counteract friction felt between themselves and longtime residents. The ideological ownership of Columbia Heights crafted on the listserv, strengthened residents' resolve to own parts of the material Columbia Heights. Simply put, it was a space to justify their role in perpetuating gentrification which then encouraged more material investment in the gentrification process. This justification was forwarded using specific rhetoric about race and class.

The Columbia Heights listserv was started on June 3, 1999 by Charles, a straight, middle-aged, middle-class, white, male resident of Columbia Heights. Started on a listserv site called *eLink*, the site was eventually bought and maintained by *Yahoo*, the website that hosts the listserv to this day. This chapter is the culmination of an extensive research project that involved reading all of the listserv's 31,228 posts from 1999-2009. I chose to read through all of the posts rather than garner a random sample due to the unpredictable nature of the conversation on the listserv. Reading through all of the posts felt more organic than choosing a random sample because so many unique, ephemeral, event-based conversation threads would be missed if any days or posts were skipped. Furthermore, a holistic understanding of the function and content of the listserv is necessary in order to make claims about its role in representing and shaping the neighborhood. From that exhaustive research, I culled posts, threads, and events that involved discussions of conflict, tension, mutual aid, coalition, proper behavior, belonging, and those that referenced markers of difference such as race, class, gender,

and sexuality. This chapter includes a handful of representative posts and threads that capture the nature of the listserv members' continued, heated discussion about Columbia Heights.

Though the exact number of members has not been tracked over time, posts reveal that the listserv grew from 154 members in September of 1999 to over 200 in 2001 to its current membership of 1,555. Demographic information was also not traceable, but a voluntary member survey Charles and his wife Julie sent out in 2001, within the 1999-2005 time frame I examine in this chapter, revealed the listserv had 100 whites, 42 black, and 15 Hispanics. 146 out of 200 respondents had an advanced or undergraduate degree, with 75% fitting into a "some extra/comfortable" income bracket. This self-selected snapshot paints a portrait of a specific *kind* of Columbia Heights resident, predominantly those in a higher social class. The issues surrounding representation (or representativeness) are discussed later in this chapter, but exploring the residents who did participate in this listserv provides valuable insight into resident discourse that shaped the imagined and built environment.

This chapter focuses on the beginning years of the Columbia Heights listserv. Starting right before the long-delayed opening of the Metro subway station, the listserv represents an unprecedented moment in which incoming middle and upper-middle-class white residents began moving into Columbia Heights and claiming the neighborhood as their own. As I will illustrate, the listserv became a site in which these demographic and ideological shifts were sussed out among a select group of residents.

The newcomers of the late 1990s are related to but distinct from newcomers that have arrived in the mid-to-late 2000s. In addition to the temporal distance, people

moving in the late 1990s tended mostly to be owners. They represented the first largescale influx of middle and upper-middle-class residents. I examine this historical moment on its own terms, but it also serves as a useful comparison to newer waves of demographic and built environmental changes in the neighborhood. Taken together, these moments offer new ways of understanding how difference is represented, manipulated, and deployed for various co-constitutive material and ideological goals.

Like traditional ethnography, this chapter is based around personal stories. Almost all of the opinions and worldviews expressed on the listserv are borne out of a conversation about an event. How these events are presented and how posters/respondents present themselves reveal the link between individual identification, meso level neighborhood interaction, and macro level engagement with issues such as racism, crime, capitalism, and ethics. Because of the publicness and proliferation of these multiple stories, these personal presentations are especially discursively productive.

The definition of oneself and others reveals particular racial ontologies brought from the individual level (e.g. “In my experience as a white person, this is what I think.”) to the universalized macro level (e.g. “I am black and I don’t mind the current development ergo one cannot argue that black people are concerned with the current development.”) Undergirding the comment threads is a fight to define a rapidly changing neighborhood. The fight for definition is a fight for territory, hinged on conversations about race, ethnicity, and class. Though my explication of threads will reveal the multifaceted nature of respondents’ comments, I have found two common ideological strands throughout the listserv archive.

The first thematic grouping is posts that promote inequitable distribution of

resources and spatial rights. These posts often use colorblind rhetoric to deny individual and systemic oppression based on race, ethnicity and class. By arguing that race, ethnicity and/or class have nothing to do with issues like development, crime, and interactions with neighbors, these posts denigrate claims that hierarchized difference plays an integral part in the ordering of Columbia Heights. The denial of racism and classism validates white residents' recent investment in the neighborhood. It works to shut down resistance to increasing gentrification. What starts as a fight on a listserv becomes the creation of a particular "map" of Columbia Heights that justifies uneven development. If incoming white residents can convince themselves and others that they belong in Columbia Heights and that they have done nothing wrong, their entrenchment in the neighborhood is reinforced. Like planning documents and real estate marketing, the listserv creates and sustains a logic that aids the material investment and development "IRL" (in real life.)

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's ethnographic work on white people's attitudes about race offers a helpful lens to understand the linguistic structures employed to obfuscate structural racism. Throughout these posts, one can recognize two of Bonilla-Silva's frames: "abstract liberalism," or the use of abstract platitudes that deny real-life, systemic oppression and "minimization of racism," or the claim that racial discrimination is no longer a central factor in culture.³ Though these rhetorical strategies have been widely acknowledged among critical race scholars, my analysis benefits specifically from Bonilla-Silva's *approach*. An analysis of such a prolific text/site as the Columbia Heights listerv requires a nuanced, small-scale categorization of how particularized linguistic structures promote certain ideologies. The wording of a sentence, the tone of one post, the use of a particular word: all of these small moves work towards a larger meaning-

making project.

Bonilla-Silva's third and fourth frame, "naturalization," the explanation of racial phenomena as naturally-occurring and "cultural racism," the justification that racial groups are inherently predisposed to commit deviant acts, are echoed in another related thematic strand on the listserv.⁴ A more explicit trend involves the outright justification of difference-based hierarchies. Black, Latina/o, and/or working-class and poor residents are constructed as dangerous, deviant, and in need of policing and/or extraction from the neighborhood. In this logic, crime and poverty are not approached as symptoms of inequality, but as reasons to punish and exclude the largely black and Latina/o population struggling with poverty and crime. Couched in arguments about the well being of the neighborhood, this justification of oppression is used to claim Columbia Heights as a neighborhood ideally headed for middle-classdom and implicit whiteness. Headed primarily by incoming white, middle and upper-middle-class residents, these types of conversations marginalize difference to promote processes of gentrification. Erasing or discrediting claims made by longtime residents weakens resistance to gentrification.

I argue that the listserv is what Michael Omi and Howard Winant have defined as a racial project, a "process in which bodies and social structures are represented and organized."⁵ The rhetorical enforcement of colorblind ideology and the conflation of difference and deviance both fit within the dominant racial formation under neoliberalism. The obfuscation of systemic issues that order the neighborhood works to justify the government-sponsored colonization project of incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents. It also threatens to shut down a different way to conceptualize the character and ideal future of the neighborhood.

This powerful racial project, however, is not the only meaning-making taking place on the listserv. Even in the listervs' disproportionately white and middle-class network of posters and readers, some posters use the listserv as a site to continually resist gentrification in the neighborhood and to contest racist and/or colorblind narratives on the listserv itself. These posts are part of an anti-racist project that elucidates the role of difference in uneven development. On a more personal level, the listserv offers longtime residents an opportunity to testify; to express outrage in the face of powerful neoliberal development processes that threaten their place in the neighborhood and in culture generally. Existing alongside posts couched in neoliberal ideology, this alternative knowledge production creates fissures in the dominant narrative, maintaining a voice of (or aligned with) the working-class and poor residents of color being written out of the neighborhood.

Speaking out against uneven development, racism, and classism does not automatically reverse the increasingly solidified entrenchment among incoming white residents. It does, however, disrupt the logic that is being constructed to erase and/or police longtime residents. By making their voices heard they keep the spectre of inequality present. In the face of gentrification discussions that frame the process as universally beneficial, recognizing the continued dissatisfaction and resistance among longtime residents is vital. Doing so illustrates that longtime residents have not been disinterested, disorganized, or too complicit. Instead, longtime residents have been out muscled by those with more power and resources. Part of what strengthened the power incoming residents had in Columbia Heights was the ideological campaign they waged on the listserv. Yet, even as incoming residents succeeded in normalizing upscale

development and discriminatory policing, strands of resistance poked through.

The listserv also facilitates posts that contain both strands. This ambivalence often takes the form of an abstract commitment to equity alongside an individualized comment that reinforces neoliberal racial and class ideology. As illustrated in chapter three, a rhetoric of investment in racial, ethnic, and class diversity does not exclude a commenter from constructing a narrative of the neighborhood in ways that reinforce racialized danger and deflect one's own role in an uneven development process. Ambivalence threads throughout these posts, illustrating an awareness of tensions surrounding difference within the neighborhood. Even amidst a denial of these tensions, the onus to deny such claims acknowledges the existence of contentious perceptions about race and class among residents.

These competing ideologies are further complicated by intraracial dynamics along lines of class. Black and Latina/o posters on the listserv often identify (explicitly or implicitly) as middle or upper-middle-class. Though I have found that respondents of color are more apt to acknowledge racism, they often do not share the same experiences and concerns of the area's working-class and poor residents of color. Posts from middle and upper-middle-class residents of color often simultaneously express anti-racism while reinforcing class marginalization, i.e. decrying persistent racial profiling while defending gentrification.

To elucidate the multilayered battle between what I somewhat reductively label neoliberal and anti-racist/classist ideological claims, I focus on two recurring themes on the listserv: crime and belonging. Given its role as a space for the exchange of ideas and practical information about the neighborhood, crime reporting is a large part of the

listserv's early years. I argue that conversations about crime became a way to further the notion of a colorblind culture in which the legacies of racism and disinvestment have no place in a conversation about keeping the streets free of criminals. The immediacy of threatened violence allows residents to move past thorny issues such as race and class, leaving the systemic processes of oppression that contribute to crime unchallenged and the potential white "victims" unindicted in that systemic process. Discussing crime also allows other residents to theorize it as a tragic result of racism and poverty rather than a threat. This thread works to humanize black (and to a lesser extent Latino) male youth who perpetrate or are associated with crime.

My analysis of the construction of belonging begins with a discussion of the making of the "we" of Columbia Heights, examining posts in which authors either claim to represent "the community" or define the neighborhood's demographics and/or character. This interpellative move grants a particular worldview authority and categorizes those that contest these definitions as outside of "Columbia Heights" as an imagined community. I then move to a specific event and the posts it engendered: the city's choice of a development proposal for the parcels surrounding the Metro subway station. The listserv became a makeshift "headquarters" for those (primarily white, middle and upper-middle-class newcomers) residents who disagreed with the city's choice. Residents launched a discussion of what was best for the neighborhood that was rife with competing ideologies surrounding race, ethnicity, class, development, and space. Finally, I discuss posts that explicitly take up the issue of development and gentrification, analyzing the back and forth between residents who advocate that all residents should embrace the neighborhood's diversity and those who "out" themselves

as profit-minded owners who live in Columbia Heights solely for its convenience and potential for real estate profits.

A Tale of Two Sites: Columbia Heights and ColumbiaHeights.com

My analysis of the Columbia Heights listserv continues this project's larger investment in the co-constitutive relationship between discourse *about* a space and the material space itself. The online discourse about Columbia Heights affects how people orient themselves in the neighborhood and how decisions are made about its development. As Gabriella Gahlia Modan has argued in her own work examining community web sites, "place identities are created through social- and linguistic- interaction. Place meanings are contested, and they serve the interests and agendas of those who create them. If we want to create communities that serve the interest of justice and equality, then we need to consider what's at stake in the ways we talk about places."⁶ Posters on the Columbia Heights listserv actively try to construct the very nature of the neighborhood: what it means, who is there, and who belongs there. Furthermore, their discussion of the neighborhood also leads to a discussion of themselves. In talking about a particular version of Columbia Heights, posters invoke their social location and identities. Their sense of self is deeply tied to how they perceive the community. As ethnographer Keith Basso argues, "we are the place-worlds we imagine."⁷ The identifications and subsequent politics of race, ethnicity, and class influence and are directly influenced by constructions of individual social location.

Subjective questions of who belongs are next to impossible to answer in any space let alone such a demographically diverse space. Thus, the website can only be a

chronicle of the multifaceted ideas circulated about a space and the politics embedded in those ideas. Rather than search for the “truth” of Columbia Heights, it is more useful to take an ethnographic approach invested in the process of meaning-making for individuals. Anthropologist Margaret Rodman conceptualizes this spatial definition project as an example of “multilocality,” an offshoot of multivocality. “Places, like voices,” she argues, “are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in these chains of experienced places are forged of culture and history.”⁸ Thus, the way a particular poster defines Columbia Heights is individualized, but is also linked to larger trends among other like-minded residents.

Despite these multiple voices on the listserv, the listserv is not wholly representative of Columbia Heights. In fact, this lack of full representation is primarily the reason why it is a discursive site of interest. The silences in the narratives serve to reinforce particular ideologies over those that are not a part of the listserv. I fully acknowledge the disproportionate number of white, middle and upper-middle-class, and newly arrived residents on the listserv. I argue that the demographic makeup of the listserv provided a unique space in which a predominantly newly-arrived, middle-class demographic came together to hash out constructions of belonging and difference within the changing neighborhood of Columbia Heights.

Though many residents off the listserv have equally meaningful views about the neighborhood, the listserv carried with it a degree of power and influence. Jim Graham, the neighborhood’s councilmember was an active participant as were influential members of both the area Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) and the Development

Corporation of Columbia Heights (DCCH.) During development deal discussions, both the *Washington Post* and the *Washington City Paper* quoted the listserv and argued for its integral role in the organized protest of the city's development plans. Even Joseph Horning, one of the developers who won a major bid, posted multiple times to defend his winning proposal. The ability to participate in these high-profile discussions harkens to cyberculture theorist Lisa Nakamura's claim that "media interactivity is power."⁹

It is dangerous to argue that this unrepresentative listserv is somehow inherently more important because of its influence, a rationale harkening back to oppressive focus on politicians and authorities rather than people in marginalized social groups. But an acknowledgement of its power is vital to understanding its relationship to the decisions that affect the built environment and its residents. Karen Mossberger, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Ramona S. McNeal have dubbed the social and political power of Internet participation as "digital citizenship," arguing that "broadening access and skills supports the equality of opportunity and membership in the political community."¹⁰ Though digital citizenship marginalizes those that do not have the access to become digital citizens, the influence of digital citizenship remains. Conversations on the Columbia Heights listserv air political and cultural agendas that enter into a conversation with influential actors such as developers, city officials, and mass media producers.

Despite its influence, the listserv's limited membership and exclusions represent larger issues embedded in the theoretical construction of online forums as parts of an imagined community. The "digital divide," or the acknowledgement that marginalized groups such as women, people of color, and working-class people have far less access to computers and the Internet, has been well documented by cyberculture scholars.¹¹

Though access has increased with the mainstreaming of home computers and the Internet, the technology was still nascent and expensive in the period I focus on in this chapter, 1999-2005. The Pew Internet and American Life Project reports that, in 2000, 50% of whites had Internet access compared to 36% of blacks, and 44% of Hispanics. When economic class is accounted for, the divide becomes all the more defined: in 2000, 68% of whites, 75% of blacks, and 74% of Hispanics in households earning less than \$30,000 were not online.¹² Acknowledging the digital divide in reference to this listserv is especially important given the history of marginalization of people of color as a group assumed to have no legitimate claims to space or property.

The access issue was also discussed on the listserv, with some respondents pointing out the social class necessary to be an active listserv participant. Julie, the moderator's wife, cut this critique down arguing, "one of the remarkable aspects of the Internet is that it is democratic. Public access to computers should be expanded -- but is currently available at the Public Library, schools, and some nonprofits in the neighborhood. People also have access to computers at work. You don't have to own the bus in order to ride on it." Julie's response briefly acknowledges the digital divide, but essentially blames those who cannot afford a home computer with Internet access (which she possesses,) with a lack of ingenuity or effort. Julie formulates the Internet as a universally accessible space for democratic exchange. Her logic echoes a "if you didn't vote, don't complain" ethos, arguing that the listserv is available to everyone if they want it and if they choose not to participate- for there are no systemic access issues that can't be overcome with individual gumption/personal responsibility- then their voices do not get to be part of the conversation. This allows the discussions on the

listserv to represent the whole of the community, universalizing and thus strengthening their particular ideologies.

Shifting from residents absent from the listserv to the presentation of those present on the listserv, another issue related to representation is that of anonymity and the self-presentation of difference. This project is centrally concerned with race, ethnicity, and class, identity markers that could hypothetically be hidden or manipulated in a poster's self-presentation online. While I acknowledge that the lack of face-to-face interactivity can manipulate what kind of difference is registered, I align myself with scholars such as David Bell and Lisa Nakamura who have articulated the various ways identity and difference do manifest online, affected by a person's own self presentation and by the influence of culture inextricable from cyberworlds.¹³ Nakamura's concept of the "cybertype," encapsulates the ways in which "identity online is still *typed*, still mired in oppressive roles even if the body has been left behind or bracketed."¹⁴ In other words, the terms of representation may change somewhat online, but difference and power always translate to cyberworlds.

Analyzing the Columbia Heights listserv often does not require a reading of subtle constructions of identity. Throughout the posts, talk of difference and diversity is constant. In fact, the ubiquity of references to difference is what led me to use the listserv as a case study in my larger project examining discourses of "diversity." Firstly, the majority of posters follow an unwritten point of "netiquette" and identify themselves by name and street. Alongside literal self-naming, posters often name their social location. Usually, this is in service of a point being argued, i.e. "as a black man, I feel this way about racial politics." Even in denying the influence of race and/or class, difference is

front and center, a far cry from the body-less utopian (or dystopian) narrative of online interaction.

The politics of anonymity go beyond issues embedded in not revealing one's social location. Charles, the listserv's founder explicitly says he finds anonymous posters problematic to which someone rebuts that anonymity allows for a certain degree of candor. Anonymity allows posters to make comments about the neighborhood and their neighbors without recourse "IRL" (in real life.) Though some argued that the anonymity provided welcome candor, others were concerned with its potential to alienate posters. Jonathan wrote, "the name-calling that goes on here is enough make people hate each other without ever having met or experienced each other in person. The test that I ask all of you to apply is this: If you were standing in line to get to the water cooler, would you make these same comments to a person standing in line behind you?" For Jonathan, etiquette for face-to-face interactions is transferable to all online interactions. In my own analysis, I have found that anonymity also allows for more openly racist and classist comments. In fact, more often than not, anonymity was employed to say something inflammatory about low-income residents of color. In the context of a culture of supposed "political correctness," anonymous posts provided a valve to say something racist/classist in a relatively public forum.

Anonymity also highlighted the listserv's role as part of the neighborhood while being distinct from traditionally defined interaction like face-to-face meetings on the street. Without succumbing to nostalgic configurations of the "neighborhood" and community, the listserv does change the "contact" of people interacting with their neighbors. Sometimes this means that they have an unprecedented opportunity to

interact with neighbors they might have otherwise only passed on the street. On the other hand, the courtesy of nods and smiles on the street can be supplanted with an online interaction that can dispose of niceties and respect given the lack of face-to-face consequences of such actions. Isabelle, in a heated exchange about neighborliness with Charles, wrote, “you wouldn't know me, however, because unlike ALL of the other long-time residents on our block with whom I've become friendly, I RARELY if ever see YOU around. If you WERE out mixing with your neighbors instead of holed up in front of your computer pounding out another poisonous missive... you'd KNOW that I stop and talk to my neighbors in passing on the street, and you MIGHT even know my name. But you don't, do you?” Here, Isabelle conceptualizes the listserv as an obstacle to relationship building in the neighborhood. In their analysis of Internet communities and urban space, James E. Katz and Ronald E. Rice note that “we may best think of Internet communities as a supplement to physical communities rather than as a complete substitute.”¹⁵ Taken in the context of a long history of technology changing interactions in/with space (e.g. trains and telegraphs), Internet communities shift rather than sublimate face-to-face interaction.

Whether an advocate or detractor of the listserv, most posters had the underlying assumption that positive (however one defines it) interaction between neighbors is a vital goal for residents. A shared goal of more substantive and productive interaction among residents led to some listserv members to meet in real life to find ways to engender face-to-face interaction with hopes of allaying racial, ethnic, and class tension flowering on the listserv. As early as September 2000, some members met and planned a neighborhood flea market in order to “bring the community together so that we can get to know each

other better.” The debate over how to go about engendering the most/best interaction fits within an underlying privileging of the public sphere as a potential space to foster democratic and justice-oriented communities.

Introduced by Jurgen Habermas, the scholarly notion of the public sphere was that of a space allowing the exchange of ideas among citizens outside the control of institutions of power. Feminist theorist Nancy Fraser’s rebuttal to Habermas’s romanticization of a public sphere beyond the grip of the state and capitalism reminds us that this “public sphere” served to “enclave certain matters in specialized discursive arenas and thereby shield them from broadly based debate and contestation. This usually works to the advantage of dominant groups and individuals and to the disadvantage of their subordinates.”¹⁶ Fraser’s critique does not undermine Habermas’s yearning for a space that values democracy and citizen participation over capitalism and governmental power. It does, however, offer a useful corrective to conceptualizing exclusive spaces as transformative for a population as a whole. Transferred to the space of the listserv, Fraser’s critique illustrates the limits of relying on a site that excludes many residents- whether for economic or cultural reasons- to forward social justice. Similarly, it is also important to qualify the optimism in arguments such as communications scholar Aaron Barlow’s speculation that the “free” technologies of the Internet could “act as a buffer (temporarily at least) against public-sphere domination by commercial forces and even allow it to be opened up again.”¹⁷ While the listserv does provide a new space for residents to forward and contest definitions of Columbia Heights, that space is not free from hierarchies of difference.

In line with Fraser’s interest in power and investment in less exclusive spaces, I

do not view the listserv within the romantic frame of the “public sphere.” I am more apt to view the listserv as what Margaret Crawford has dubbed a “counterpublic,” a space (I extrapolate to include online spaces,) that produces “a very different picture of the public sphere, one founded on contestation rather than unity and created through competing interests and violent demands as much as reasoned debates.”¹⁸ The listserv, even with its demographic absences, is a space where racist and classist ideology and anti-racist/classist narratives clash. Though the former is more frequently presented and thus reinforces hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism, the contestation does represent the essence of any built environment. Rather than argue that the listserv is or is not part of the “public sphere,” I instead merely ground my claims in the argument that, whatever it is, the listserv both reveals and constructs something about the neighborhood.

Defining Crimes: Difference and Territory

On the listserv, discourses surrounding crime and safety were rife with explicit conversations about race and class. To begin this analysis, I theorize how crime and safety are constructed: what constitutes a crime, who is at fault, and how is “safety” achieved? I argue that some participants on the listserv construct “crime” as shorthand for crimes against incoming white residents perpetrated by black, male youths. Furthermore, I argue that “crime” is a category that can be broadened to include individual acts like mugging in addition to the more systemic injustices in the development process. I then examine a handful of specific discussion threads to tease out posters’ perceptions of crime and underlying issues of difference. I focus on an argument about calling young black males “pieces of crap,” claims that black on white harassment is “reverse racism,”

and a discussion about racial profiling.

Some posters focused on the underlying issues that caused things like property crimes and muggings. These posters took what I call an “interventionist” position, wanting to help children reverse the effects of poverty, racism, and seemingly unstable home lives. In other conversations about racial profiling, residents of color were more unified across class lines, offering a unique opportunity for otherwise neoliberal-minded middle and upper-middle-class black and Latina/o newcomers to acknowledge systemic racism. By rejecting the dominant narrative of racialized deviance, these posters temporarily destabilized scripts that were used to justify the policing of residents of color. These thematic trends amount to a substantive engagement with the hierarchy of difference.

More often, crime became a way to further the notion of a colorblind culture in which the legacies of racism and disinvestment had no place in a more-pressing conversation about keeping the streets free of criminals. Posters used the threat of black on white crime as a way to shut down any conversation about social injustice. In other words, in the face of perceived danger or the threat of violence, one cannot afford to be “politically correct” and waste time trying to help the black male youths associated with crime. Additionally, black on white crime often becomes a phenomenon that reinforces the perceived oppression of incoming white residents, creating a racial hierarchy (i.e. on the streets, blacks are more powerful than whites) that ends up forwarding the inverse hierarchy (whites have more power to police/displace/marginalize blacks.) Finally, I examine how discussion of crime shifted over the years, moving from a more contentious battle between neoliberal and interventionist ideologies to a more uniform (but still

somewhat contested) “zero tolerance” approach to policing the neighborhood and achieving the “safety” befitting of a increasingly middle-class neighborhood.

By disproportionately reporting crimes against white newcomers, people on the listserv created a discursive map of Columbia Heights in which whites were in need of more resources than residents of color. This created a communal sense that white people were the victims in Columbia Heights. Not only did this absolve white residents’ guilt about gentrifying, it emboldened them to demand increased policing. They set up neighborhood watches, and petitioned councilmember Graham and the Metropolitan Police Department. What started as outrage on the listserv soon translated to a shift in how resources were distributed: white people got more police protection and residents of color were increasingly surveilled. What started as a fight on a listserv translated into how the street was ordered.

An analysis of listserv conversation about “crime” must first start with an examination of the construction of “crime” as a naturalized categorization of certain people and behaviors. Beyond an investigation into the marginalization that leads to crime, it is important to acknowledge that crime itself is discursively produced as a term that reinforces particular social situations. Definitions of crime and related concepts such as “safety” and “fear,” chart urban landscapes in highly politicized ways. Planning historian Dora Epstein deconstructs modernist planning approaches that engender what she calls “city-fear,” which is “the type of fearing that is learned as one inhabits a city in which planning interventions have defined what to fear and then sought to allay.”¹⁹ She goes on to argue that fear is “a spatialized signification of power relations.”²⁰ In other words, fear is not an inherent response to objectively dangerous situations. Even when

faced with the threat of immediate danger, that threat and subsequent fear are mediated through assumptions about people and spaces.

What happens when fear is realized in the form of physical violence? Beyond the oft-cited transaction of crossing the street to avoid a racial Other, how do people present events in which a threat is carried out and a person of color does steal property or inflict violence onto white residents? The visceral reaction to violence complicates the discussion of territory. The victims of trauma are worthy of empathy, but I argue that it is precisely the affective power of violence that often deflects attention away from issues of racial and class marginalization.

Before citing specific discussions of crime, I offer a brief explication of the types of behaviors discussed. Almost all the posts about crime in this time period relate to property damage/theft, assault and battery and, to a lesser extent, gang-related shootings. Property damage runs the gamut from stealing porch flowers to smashing windows to throwing snow balls. Muggings all involve theft and the threat if not perpetration of hand-to-hand, knife, or gun violence. All of these crimes are reported as perpetrated by black, male working-class or poor youths who presumably live in the neighborhood. In fact, posters often link the crimes (rightfully or erroneously) to particular public housing complexes in the neighborhood.

Conversations about crime are often opportunities for posters to forward a colorblind ideology that denies the role of difference in crime. Crime is made a pre-cultural, objectively bad experience that everyone can supposedly rally against. Over and over again, posters repeat a “no one wants crime in the neighborhood” mantra. While this strategy could be a useful coalition builder to improve everyone’s lives in the

neighborhood, it also reinforces structures of racism and classism. Kevin crystallizes this, writing in 2003 that “all of this crap about racism and gentrification and socio-economic status needs to be left at the keyboard and elsewhere. None of you - black, white, latino, asian, rich, poor, whatever want crime in your neighborhood.” For Kevin, the universality of fighting crime provides an opportunity to end conversations about systemic processes that, I argue, lead to this landscape of criminalized behaviors. Policing criminals becomes a vital objective, while debates about systemic violence are denigrated as trivial and/or unrelated to the material conditions of the neighborhood.

No one should live in fear, but the posters are rarely concerned with the daily threats facing black and Latina/o youths involved in gang culture. Black on black, black on brown, brown on brown, and brown on black violence are rarely reported or discussed on the listserv. When they are discussed, it is usually in the context of the danger they present to bystanders, mourning the loss caused by a stray bullet or worrying about walking the streets. Black on white crime is universalized and thus the only crimes conceptualized as pressing concerns are those against incoming middle and upper-middle-class white residents.

The way violence among men of color is discussed, if at all, works to reinforce the notion that violence against whites is worse and more important to the general agenda of Columbia Heights citizens. This privileging of white subjects is sometime contested on the listserv, as when Shanice responded to a heated discussion about increased muggings by asking posters “are you looking for Tyrone’s killer?” a reference to a black child shot and killed earlier in the year by a perpetrator still at large. Her question is an indictment of the absence or disproportionately low concern for black victims of violence.

Some posters actively deny that their discussion of crime holds particular racial politics. For instance, In February 2003, Kevin noted that “there really are quite a few thugs of every race & variety hanging out in CH.” His “every race and variety” qualifier is unconvincing given his use of the highly racialized term “thugs” and the relative lack of white male youths committing crime in the neighborhood. Instead, the inclusive language works as what Bonilla-Silva has called a “discursive buffer,” preemptively guarding the poster against accusations of racism.²¹

In that same thread, posters such as Garth do not employ a discursive buffer, opting instead for more explicit negation of problems facing black youth: “to the thugs and the delinquents in Columbia Heights, I have this message: YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED. Count them now, and within a year from now you will either be in jail, succeeded in having your family thrown out of government housing and moved out of the city, or killed by the local gangs. Clearly your choice.” Garth’s threat not only constructs violence among young men of color as not as important, it also implies that this violence is an inevitable and almost Darwinian phenomenon. His comments render black/Latino on white violence as unacceptable and vigilante violence to combat it justified and necessary.

For Garth, black/Latino on black/Latino violence is inevitable, proof of people of color’s deviance, as well as a phenomenon that will lessen the criminal population of the neighborhood via jail sentences and murder. In these few sentences, violence is framed in a variety of ways to preserve racist hierarchies. The disproportionate discussion of crime with white victims may reflect the demographics of the listserv. But even the logic of an affinity towards reporting events that affect one’s own social group does not

justify rhetorically constructing crime as exclusively black/Latino on white, and making working-class and poor people of color synonymous with criminality.

The disproportionate reporting of black on white violence creates a discursive silence that leaves the violence of inequitable development unchallenged. Violence is mugging. It is not the displacement of residents, the policing of black and Latino male youth, and the denial of social services that deprive poor residents of basic necessities. In this kind of rhetoric, crime must be taken on its own terms and those naturalized terms exist in a vacuum from systemic racial and class-based violence.

Examining how individualized violence is constructed as bad elucidates the link between discussion of crime and development. Firstly, violence threatens personal safety. It also threatens certain people's sense of belonging. Columbia Heights's status as "home" is threatened when that homespace becomes dangerous. In February of 2003, Garth illuminates another important reason to quell violence:

These burdens on society have also caused a clear problem on new businesses opening up on and near the METRO station. 7-11 has had to institute a limit on these kids in the store at one time, because they were getting robbed blind otherwise. The Chinese restaurant has lost business because they block the entrance and harass folks attempting to get in.

Despite common rhetoric that privileges personal safety above all else, comments such as this one reveal how closely violence is tied up with spatial politics and development concerns. White middle and upper-middle-class newcomers are worried about their bodies, but they are also worried about not controlling their territory and losing the potential profit that coaxed many to the neighborhood. Violence prevents gentrification.

The spatial politics of crime are further elucidated when the kinds of recurring crime are examined. Most crimes are about the destruction or theft of property. Theft is

linked to a gap in wealth and the lack of resources among poor and working-class black and Latino youth. Theft, in addition to property damage and assault, also violates whites' sense of comfort and security. These crimes can be viewed as battles in a turf war in a space beginning to be transformed by real estate speculation and uneven development. In the context of some newcomers' struggle to "belong" in their new, developing (and eventually upscaling) neighborhood, a violation of security is a radical act that counteracts gentrifiers' quest for belonging. I am not arguing that this kind of crime is always and/or consciously a political act, but the desired effect of the act aligns these acts with what Robin D.G. Kelly has called *infrapolitics*: "daily confrontations, evasive actions, and stifled thoughts that amount to everyday resistance against oppression."²²

Take, for example, Lisabeth's August 2004 post about confronting some young, black boys who had been throwing rocks at her property. She told them, "when you throw rocks in this neighborhood, you are throwing rocks at me. I told them that I work hard and when they break the windows, I have to pay for it. The kids said that they have lived [here] longer. They are 9 years old- I told them that doesn't matter and that I have lived here for 11 years- longer than them." The children's biting response reveals a consciousness, most likely passed down from peers and parents, of a turf war between working-class people of color and incoming whites. This was not just youthful folly nor was it an illogical and pathological act. It was a response. As I weave through three particular conversations about crime, I will highlight the complicated ideologies forwarded and contested.

Misguided Pieces of Crap: The Contested Anatomy of a Criminal

In August of 2000 Elizabeth, a white recent Columbia Heights resident, alerted the listserv that she had been mugged:

Just wanted to warn everyone to be on the look out for 4 black youths (about 12 - 16 years old) on bikes. They attempted to rob me as I was going into my home. The one put what I believe was a sawed-off shot gun (barrel about 12 - 14 inches long) at my head. For reasons unknown, the gun went off (luckily it still wasn't pointed at my head) and sounded like a bomb going off which alerted my neighbors to come out. I filed a police report and was told there would be a follow-up but, of course, the police haven't responded back yet. So be careful!

The response that followed became a discussion about the very humanity of Elizabeth's attackers. Because of the subtle diplomatic and critical rhetorical moves embedded in the responses, I have quoted several at length. The sympathetic response Tony- a gay, white newcomer- posted, served as the catalyst for the days-long conversation about black youth that followed:

I am SO sorry to hear this.... Many of you all have fought for more years than I can count to re-claim Columbia Heights from pieces of crap like them. I think that this shows that the fight is not over. I am guilty of this myself, but I think it is important that we get involved with the police, hold them accountable, and help them out.

Rachel, an African American woman and recent Columbia Heights resident, addressed both Elizabeth and Tony in her response:

Thank you for warning/informing us of the attempted robbery of which you were the victim. I am very thankful for this LISTSERV which keeps us all informed of events both positive and negative that occur in our community. Mostly, I am relieved that you were not physically harmed and pray that the emotional consequences of experiences like these do not pollute your psyche for an extended period of time. Thanks again for making notification of your neighbors a priority. Unfortunately, I must use this same communication to voice my outrage at the comments of Tony. Tony, I hope that you will cool off and realize that children, no matter how wayward, are not pieces of crap. They may be dangerously misguided. They may be a severe annoyance. They may cause frustration beyond

adequate description. But, they are never merely pieces of crap. I find the characterization extremely offensive. And, would be just as offended if you were a parent and someone called one of your children a piece of crap. And yes, I am certain you would be offended by someone referring to your offspring as a piece of crap even if they were engaged in criminal activity. Lastly, it is the damnation of words like that which isolate these offenders into a non-rehabilitational [sic] class to which no human being deserves to be condemned. Your sincere concern for Elizabeth and our community is greatly clouded by those three small words.

Like most critiques on the listserv, Rachel's did not go unquestioned. Tony rebutted, posting:

All, I am sorry if I offended anyone with my statement. Unfortunately, I think that when you hear a story of four "dangerously misguided" youths who, while robbing someone, discharges an illegal firearm at or near that person, "dangerously misguided" does not seem to be an accurate description of the perpetrators. Nor does a "severe annoyance" quite grasp the feelings that I feel when I hear of this. To me a "severe annoyance" is a person who is too lazy to knock on the door of my next door neighbor at 3 in the morning, so he sits out and honks his horn from the curb. For some reason, a gang of armed teenagers is a bit more than a "severe annoyance". And I have to disagree that "They may cause frustration beyond adequate description", no, this too just does not grasp the situation. I have hard time putting a human qualities, or lack thereof, to anyone who can approach a woman on the streets, hold a LOADED gun to her head, rob, or attempt to rob her, FIRE that weapon, and flee. They are in the business of de-humanizing our neighbors and friends, I can't imagine the feelings that are going through Elizabeth's head. My heart goes out to her. I am glad she is still with us to tell us her story. So while I apologize for offending you, I can think of no other phrase to use that is fit for public viewing.

Sara then echoed Rachel in her response to the listserv:

I think what we're talking about (or what has developed) is not a conversation of "political correctness" but of world views and the way we view other human beings. Perhaps the reason these young people feel compelled to go about the business of "de-humanizing our neighbors and friends", is because they have felt (and actually have been) de-humanized all their lives.

Dee also agreed that "these young people however misguided are not 'crap.' They are fully human, however misguided. I also need to point out that the demonization of them

follows a white American tradition of demonizing people of color in ways that rob us of our full humanities.” Terrence and Christopher, a newly-arrived couple, then supported Tony’s initial assessment:

Tony, you don't have to apologize for what you've written, I've talked to many neighbors who were not as kind with their words. I'm angry about the fact that ANYONE would try and shift the attention away from the victims and towards the criminals and their families. Putting a shotgun to someone's head is NOT a cry for help. It's a blatant, senseless CRIME...period.

The terms of this back-and-forth hinge on the amount of sympathy Elizabeth’s attackers deserve. While Rachel, Sara, and Dee argued that the youths are misguided and in need of intervention, others used Elizabeth’s traumatic experience as an opportunity to forward a draconian, reactive response that constructs black, male youths as subjects unworthy of any positive consideration. These black male youths have violated a social contract and are now not eligible for neighborhood respect. This violation becomes a convenient way to silence claims for the equity of longtime black resident often voiced on the listserv.

Going along with the colorblind rhetoric of many posters, this denial of claims is allegedly not about race, but rather about criminals. The end result, though, is the further marginalization of most-likely poor or working-class black, male youths. Furthermore, deployed in a highly emotional moment, the sympathy for the victim contains within it a rhetorical move that tries to shut down those complicated conversations about equitable claims to space and resources. Akin to a call for war amidst tragedy, Tony, Terrence, and Christopher demonize those that continue to promote anti-racist/classist critiques. Despite these efforts, though, posters like Rachel, Sara, and Dee stand their ground and contradict the racist undertones of the incensed posts of Tony et al.

The critique of dehumanization rhetoric carries with it a call for intervention: a

seemingly substantive engagement with the children and their parents to teach them the proper way to behave and steer them away from crime. As a brief fast-forward, I would like to relay a similar conversation about property crime done by black male youths in the summer of 2002. The discussion was a solution-oriented debate about how to end the incidents. When reports begin to trickle onto the listserv about property damage caused by black youths Angela said, “part of me feels sorry for them that they are so young yet so messed up. Another part of me can't wait until some less patient adult smacks the shit out of them.” Later, she tempered her anger, letting the listserv know, “I have spoken with the folks at the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, and they have offered to facilitate a process for addressing the situation around the kids.”

Don, a vocal black listserv member and longtime Columbia Heights resident, expresses a similarly interventionist sentiment:

Believe me, I am not a liberal touchy feeling person. We don't need to like each other, just relationships of enlightened self interest. For me how we address these out of control children is a metaphor for everything. A failure here is a failure for development, good government, quality of life and so on. Is that fair, I don't know but it's just how I see things.

George, however, remains unconvinced, forwarding a familiar sentiment that, “It's not the absence of ‘dialogue’ or a lack of ‘diversity’ that creates these little terrors, it's rotten parents who take no responsibility for their children.” Though, as Angela also suggests, parents could be spoken to, George seems to imply that these “terrors” have been thoroughly socialized and are already socially irredeemable.

Calls for intervention depart from but are not completely divorced from racial and class marginalization. Intervention acknowledges black youth as worthy of help. It has the potential to acknowledge contexts beyond individual interaction and potentially work

against some systemic processes that reinforce racism and poverty that then leads to criminality as a concept and a behavior. But intervention is also always beset with power dynamics. In this case, intervention does take on elements of patrician charity, reinforcing hierarchical power differentials between upper and lower classes in addition to whites and people of color. These dialogues also reinforce scripts of the pathological family structures of low-income families of color. A focus on the upbringing of public housing residents echoes a discourse of social dysfunction divorced from an acknowledgement of racial and class-based oppression. Still, intervention represents a deeper engagement with racism and classism than the dehumanization projects forwarded by the vocal critics of criminal “pieces of crap.”

The continued scrutinizing of black, male youth throughout the listserv’s archive also invokes racial surveillance and hierarchical categorization projects. Patricia Williams references this ideological (and material) policing of black people as a “consignment to some collective public state of mind, known alternatively as ‘menace’ or ‘burden.’” She speculates that, “it might be that public and private are economic notions, i.e., that the right to privacy might be a function of wealth...haves are entitled to privacy, in guarded, moated castles; have-nots must be out in the open—scrutinized, seen with their hands open and empty to make sure they’re not pilfering.”²³ Posters feel comfortable and often obligated to categorize these youths and they often do so by arguing their deviant lack of humanity. The repeated, negative categorization of the very nature of these perpetrators echoes Williams’s articulation of who is allowably open to constant surveillance. As the conversation about racial profiling later in this chapter reveals, the categorization of these specific black, male youths often leads to assumptions about all black, male youths.

Tony, Terrence, and Christopher all argue that concern for the perpetrators profanes Elizabeth's experience, but Rachel's critical post goes out of her way to express both sympathy for Elizabeth's potential trauma and thankfulness for sharing her experience for the benefit of the listserv members' own safety. Rachel's diplomatic response is a product of the difficult reconciliation of validating personal trauma without allowing that emotional experience to erase larger conversations about race. If the responses agreeing with Tony's "pieces of crap" categorization have the effect of validating racism under the smokescreen of sympathy, Rachel's critique represents a counter-discursive move that challenges the privileging of white victims. Sara's even more explicit critique links Tony's dehumanization with the ubiquitous dehumanization of black male youth in that moment on the listserv and in culture generally. Rachel, Sara, and Dee offer nuanced critiques against the powerful logic of neoliberalism repeatedly reproduced in conversations surrounding criminality.

As a final note further highlighting the complexity of this thread's engagement with difference, I would like to include Rachel's response to Terrence and Chris's defense of Tony's remarks:

A community as large as this list deserves more special consideration of our diverse backgrounds and perspectives. If Tony had used language derogatory to certain lifestyle choices, the shouts may have been even louder and longer. The fact that we are talking about adjectives used to dehumanize criminals does not make the expression more acceptable.

Rachel's response was one of the few times sexuality is invoked on the listserv, adding another dimension of difference to conversations about crime and victimhood. The "language derogatory to certain lifestyle choices" is most likely code for homophobic slurs. Rachel formulated a hierarchy of marginalization within Terrence and Chris's (and

presumably others in the same social location) worldview, implying that incoming white, gay men are more invested in combating dehumanization based on sexuality than on race. By invoking hypocrisy, Rachel references the existence of racism among white, gay men. In the context of gentrification, in which white, gay men are often stereotypically assumed to be involved, difference in uneven urban development becomes a question of race, class and sexuality.

Minding My Own Business: Invocations of Reverse Racism

Reports of crime perpetrated by local youth often go beyond the rhetoric of colorblind justice. Several posters argued that crime was not only not about white racism, it was sometimes about racism against whites. In April of 2002, Jodi writes:

A bunch of boys, 8-10 years old tried to follow me into my apartment building last night, I don't know why.....just hijinx, I guess. When the security door shut them out, they started to bang on the door and throw themselves against the glass and windows. (There are no children living in the building so they weren't residents). I told them to knock it off and move along. This only got them going more, and then I found myself being called a "white bitch" amongst other charming epithets by a bunch of little kids. Rather than yell back, I tried to defuse the situation by appealing to reason, "Why are you behaving this way? I know you know better..." type of thing. No effect, more insults.

Later that year, Angela- the woman arguing for parental intervention earlier in this chapter- relayed a similar incident about a group "who threw a brick at me in the 1400 block of Harvard street in February (I was ringing a doorbell, which provoked them for some reason), whom I saw throwing rocks at cars in the 1300 block of Irving street yesterday evening, and who have called me "white bitch" as well, along with other choice names."

These crimes were harassment, linking them with an ongoing battle for territory

and belonging in the neighborhood. That the youths called these residents “white bitch” and other presumably racialized epithets made the territorial conflict explicitly about race. The residents’ engagement with the slurs operates within a historical moment rife with civil rights backlash. As George Lipsitz notes, the late 20th century saw a growing contempt of affirmative action and other redistributive programs, culminating in a rhetorical strategy “elevating the settled expectations and group position of whites over the demands for justice by members of aggrieved racial groups.”²⁴ The inclusion of these specific racial slurs in the short narratives on the listserv imply an added insult to the injury of harassment. Highlighting the humiliation of being called a “white bitch” privileges one instant of black on white racism, implicitly making that moment more important than the systemic and individual white on black racism in Columbia Heights and the U.S. generally. Claims of reverse racism further shut down claims of white on black racism in the neighborhood.

There is another similarity between these stories. All spotlight the seemingly unprovoked nature of the harassment. Joseph adds his experience to the summer 2002 conversation, telling the listserv:

A few weeks ago, a group of young boys, 9-12, walked by my front yard, where I was working. They called a white bitch, threw rocks at me and hit me in the head with one of them. I called the police. They came immediately, but when they showed up and found out that I was calling because children had thrown rocks at me, they were more amused than concerned.²⁵

In the summer of 2004, Elizabeth, the woman whose mugging prompted the “pieces of crap” conversation, tells of her own experience with a group of youths throwing rocks, noting, “I walked past them and decided to mind my own business as they did not look very friendly. After I passed, they threw rocks at me (big rocks) and some other people.”

The white victims of harassment continually reassure readers that they “don’t know” what caused the incidents, as they were “minding their own business,” doing things as benevolent as “ringing a doorbell” or working in one’s front yard. This innocence absolves the narrators of any responsibility for being harassed. But the terms of racial and class tension have been firmly set on the listserv itself. Painting themselves as purely innocent victims elides their association with processes of gentrification that negatively affect working-class and poor people of color. While one criminal act by a black youth can be enough to shut down any past claims of black oppression, whites being subjected to racism one time absolves any past association with the perpetration of racial violence.

The language of minding one’s own business also potentially constructs this kind of black on white harassment as something inevitable or seemingly natural. Much like those that argued that the criminalized children were beyond rehabilitation, black youths are constructed as inherently menacing and illogical. Perhaps this is also a rhetorical move that serves to illuminate the supposed ubiquity of racism against whites in the post-civil rights era. Like an inverse to “driving while black” (“gardening while white?”), these stories imply that white residents are victims of a larger systemic process of racial oppression. Whether thugs or under-qualified applicants, blacks have unjustifiably been given the wrong kind of power.

Three Black Men: Racial Profiling and the Shifting of Alliances

Ever the magnet for controversy, in December 2000, Tony posted what he thought was a neutral warning to the Columbia Heights listserv community, taken from a local

police report. "I wanted to warn you guys," he wrote, "that there is a group (3) of young black men early 20's that have been robbing people in and around 13th and Columbia Road. I saw them in action the other night, I foiled their plan to snatch a purse from a women (I was in my car going around the block). Please, Please, Please be careful when you are walking around the streets right now." Soon after, Dawn, a black woman, responds with a critique that, like Rachel's earlier "pieces of crap" post, is couched in appreciation:

Neighbors -- I live in the "double block" of Columbia Road and therefore very much appreciate being alerted to problems with robberies at my corner. However, I want to raise the absurdity of [the police] having provided my neighbors with the mere description of "three Black men". What does that describe? How is that description assist in identifying three criminals?.... When we are alerted to look out for "three Black men", we are being told to view my 76-years-old father, the Mayor, my 15-years-old nephew, the police chief, my hard-working neighbors, my ANC commissioner [a member of a community advisory council] and my friends. The result is that we've merely driven a wedge of distrust and another of anger at racial profiling -- when, in fact, my father, the Mayor, my nephew, the police chief, my neighbors, my ANC commissioner and my friends share an earnest desire for [the police] to truly identify the three alleged criminals.

Dawn's critique of the police report and Tony's report argues that racial profiling is most dangerous because it prevents effective crime fighting. Her talk of "anger" surrounding racial profiling denigrates the practice, but also fails to explicate why that anger exists and is justified (i.e, being the target of consistent, systemic racial oppression.) It instead unites the neighborhood as a community sharing the same goal while painting the whole debate as a distracting "wedge" issue.

Unsurprisingly, Tony responded to Dawn:

Please stop reading what you think you see, or what others paraphrase it to say, and read what was written, I said, "a group (3) of young black men early 20's that have been...." So your argument of the mayor, a 74 year old

man, and your 15 year old would not fit the description I gave. Furthermore given the fact that the police reports that are released by MPD are very short, and lack detail, that is the best I could do. Don't make this an issue, it is not, it is just information. Trust me I am sure I will say something wrong soon, and then you guys can jump all over me. But this is not it.

Tony's s outrage over being taken to task when he was trying to help the listserv echoes the arguments made about profaning Elizabeth's moment of vulnerability. In both cases, the accusation of racism is all the more vulgar, inappropriate and factually incorrect when it is made in light of an allegedly generous act. This perceived lack of social grace further marginalizes anti-racist posters as not credible. It also provides another excuse to not talk about racism.

The accusation of "reading into things" fits into a larger rhetorical pattern on the listserv, downplaying and denying claims that racism persists. In his response, Tony charts the specific reasons why he is not, at that moment, practicing racial profiling. He also concedes that he would hold himself accountable if he has or will say something inappropriate. In other words, he allows for some abstract potential of racism in the midst of shutting down the blame in this incident. Yet these incidents of perceived racism proliferate throughout the listserv's archive, amongst him and others. Individual denials of racism in particular moments accumulate to a largescale logic that no incident is ever about race.

While some portions of the thread deny racial profiling, there are a number of detractors that align themselves with a critique more grounded in anti-racism than Dawn's claims of pragmatism. Shaynna, a longtime African American resident, responded to Tony's discussion of the incident with a personal story:

the difference is, with racial profiling it means that my cousin 15-year-old

Will, the mayor and each of my uncles could be stopped based on that vague description. We're not accusing you of any wrong-doing Tony, we're just trying to help you understand what is-- and we're not making this up, read the paper!-- in the world today. It means that I was told to "move on" in my own neighborhood, while wearing t-shirt and jeans because two guys saw me standing on the corner of 13th & Columbia Road, so I must be a prostitute, right? No one is trying to make you feel bad, Tony. But we are trying to help you understand that ALL of our words, actions and descriptions have consequences.

Shaynna's contribution offers a rare interjection of female gender in a conversation overwhelmingly focused on masculinity.

Jim, a relatively newly-arrived black resident, also produces a thorough and personal critique of Tony's statements and denials:

Granted that Tony's initial message was a "heads up" and he was just passing on information. But he then goes on to say that he foiled a robbery by this same group. Yet, he doesn't enhance their descriptions from his vantage as not only an eyewitness, but as a non-passive intervener. While I applaud his bold action and give thanks for his well-being I have to ask, why not a more detailed description? My son and his buds from Sherman Ave could easily fit the description given in the police report.

While Shaynna's contributions to the listserv during her years-long tenure have consistently forwarded anti-racist and anti-classist critiques of the changing neighborhood, Jim has often been ideologically aligned with the incoming middle and upper-middle-class property owners. He has criticized the behaviors and even hygiene of poor public-housing residents of color and has promoted efforts to continue the upscale-leaning development of the neighborhood, denying negative effects on longtime working-class residents.

Jim's sympathies, however, do not extend to a colorblind denial of racial profiling's existence. His experience as a black man has revealed the reality of racist policing. His lack of empathy to the systemic oppression of working-class and poor

residents stems from his class location, but his class status does not give him the mobility to escape his embodiment. His comments, taken with the narrative of Shaynna's interpellation as and implicit alienation of female sex workers, reveal residents' positional shifts based on intersecting markers of difference, further complicating the posters' jockeying between neoliberal, anti-racist, and anti-classist ideologies. Jim and Shaynna's posts also illuminate the integral role of personal experience in the listserv's discursive project.

Despite his personal and political stance on racial profiling, Jim ends his long post with a warning: "...Don't be stupid, if you are out and your personal "Spidey-Sense" indicates something may be amiss don't worry about being PC; be safe, watch your back." His helpful advisement for neighbors to be careful also forwards the rhetoric of "political correctness" backlash. He seems to imply, like many who post about crime, that even if you are willing to have a conversation about racism and classism, anti-racism and anti-classism have no place when face to face with crime. Nonetheless his earlier, extended critique of racial profiling once again reveals class and race as intersecting variables that can alter a poster's alliance in the ideological fight on the listserv.

Broken Windows, Breaking Points

As time went on, the active ideological battles about difference and crime began to give way to posters' increasing exasperation with crime. The mid 2000s saw a decrease in debates surrounding crime, race, and class alongside an increase in posts advocating harsher "zero tolerance" approaches to criminals. The increase of these kinds of posts illustrates the ideological influence of earlier posts that privileged black on white

violence. Performing exasperation similarly privileges crime as an immediate and universal threat. Whatever energy posters supposedly had to discuss systemic problems, was then worn down by consistent crime. While I do not mean to minimize the affective experience of living in a neighborhood with incidences of petty and violent crime, I question the cultural effects of this exhaustion. Posters who are “not going to take it anymore” do not have time to focus on racism and classism. They instead devote their energies to a war on crime that disproportionately oppresses black male youth. Using exasperation and exhaustion as a justification for a crackdown implies that marginalized working-class and poor criminals of color caused this exhaustion and thus those moving towards zero tolerance are justified in the violence they commit.

This harsh approach to crime was present throughout the listserv’s history, as evidenced in Garth’s missive posted in early 2003:

This is not acceptable and there better be a way to communicate this to the section 8 and public housing residents. As our Neighborhood Association files our Articles of Incorporation this month, our first priority is to come down hard on ANY property that harbors criminals and/or criminal activity. We will properly notify complex owners and their management companies, and if we see no improvement WE WILL execute OPERATION CRACKDOWN.

Garth uses the supposed crisis point of high crime and low police response to justify the broad persecution of poor and working-class people of color.

The frequency of these posts noticeably increases, concomitant with Columbia Heights’s increasing development and influx of middle and upper-middle-class residents. The correlation between the neighborhood’s increased upscaling and the zero tolerance rhetoric of the listserv is no coincidence. As noted in chapter three, incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents often demand that the neighborhood in which they have

invested their time and money be free of subjects and behaviors deemed deviant.

Historically, the city is more receptive to these demands when they come from wealthier, incoming residents.

Inflammatory, violent posts do not go wholly unquestioned, as when Jeff expressed concern about residents “trying to wage war on a group of misguided section 8 children for throwing snowballs and painting graffiti.” The debate generated by calls for racist vigilanteism in the mid-2000s, however, is not nearly as robust as those in the early years of the listserv. Instead of days-long debate, no one directly critiqued Carly when she asked, “do we need to take to the streets armed? Our taxes go up, but where are our city services ?” Nor is there much of a response when Jacob revealed his reverse racist conspiracy theory and subsequent plan of action:

White people at the median income level or above have no rights in Columbia Heights and are the root of all problems. I suggest you and your friends form a possey and start regulating yourself because the police are as useless as tits on a boar when it comes to preventing crime. The DC government is not much better - their chief concern is making sure they are handing out enough welfare to stay elected rather than protecting the people who pay for it. Seriously, I suggest a posse.

Perhaps people felt outraged by these posts. Perhaps they did not want to validate these posts by responding. Whatever the reason that lead to the slow quieting of ideological battles around crime, the growing imbalance of the neoliberal vs. anti-racist/classist discourse marks a distinct rhetorical moment. Left largely unchallenged, these calls to arms are normalized and thusly reinforce neoliberal and more explicitly racist ideologies.

The Boundaries of Community

Moving to a more explicit construction of belonging and exclusion, this section examines how “community” is constructed throughout the listserv. Using a series of posts that responded to the large-scale development plans for the parcels of land adjacent to the Metro subway stations that appeared early on in the listserv’s existence, I explore divergent claims about who belongs in Columbia Heights and what the neighborhood wants for its ideal future. As with discussion surrounding crime, these conversations all engaged with difference, exhibiting both neoliberal and anti-racist/classist ideologies in the process of discursively producing Columbia Heights.

“Community” has long been a vital part of how people envision spaces. Though demographics and everyday interactions between people on the street shape how people conceptualize community, rhetorical work, like that found on the Columbia Heights listserv, is equally important. As Benedict Anderson has famously argued, “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”²⁶ Often times, discourse that belies certain demographic and material realities is most influential in the definition process. I argue that defining a particular “we” of Columbia Heights incorporates certain subjects and social locations into the “proper” Columbia Heights, leaving those with diverging views silenced, denigrated and otherwise ousted from this version of Columbia Heights.

The context of this community building project is a literal building project: the Redevelopment Land Agency’s decision to award Horning and Grid the development rights to several valuable parcels of land surrounding the subway station. The development debates made up a large part of the listserv from 1999-2002. From the start

of the bidding process, each proposal was tied up with race and class politics. The Horning proposal, from local development company Horning Brothers, included a plan to restore part of the historic Tivoli movie theater and use the remaining space to build a new *Giant* supermarket and adjoining town houses and retail space. The New York-based Grid Properties proposal planned an entertainment complex with two ice rinks, a movie theater, a sports club and other retail for the parcel across the street from the two Metro subway entrances. This proposal was favored by Robert Moore, a longtime black activist turned developer with close ties to Marion Barry. It was also popularly conceived of as the proposal most favored by longtime, working-class black residents.²⁷

Cleveland-based Forest City Enterprises planned to develop an “urban center” with a multi-screen theater, supermarket, office building, town houses and stores featuring retailers like *Old Navy*, *Sports Authority*, and *Kids R Us*. This plan was favored by the majority of listserv contributors, mostly white, middle and upper-middle-class residents new to the area within the 5-7 years. The listserv harbored an active debate between the two “camps,” but the majority of posters used the listserv to air grievances with the city’s decision. It even became a makeshift “headquarters” for Forest City proponents and an organizing tool for “IRL” protests and public relations work.

Viewing the listserv as a more representative community space outside the “crooked” and erroneous development processes, Forest City proponents constructed their plan and their headquarters as more altruistic and democratic. It is useful to view the formulation of this community space as seemingly outside of state institutions through the lens of Miranda Joseph’s work on the discursive deployment of “community.” She argues that, “in being articulated as discontinuous from each other and ‘society,’

communities are actually linked to capitalism and through capitalism to each other. I propose that precisely through being cast as its opposite, community functions in complicity with ‘society,’ enabling capitalism and the liberal state.”²⁸ In other words capitalism needs the idea of the supposedly exterior “community” to be supported.

Though vocal Forest City proponents were arguing their investment in community building, they were not outside the systems of profit and racial/class tension they critiqued in RLA and Horning’s dealings. In fact, these discussions were precisely about protecting predominantly white, middle and upper-middle-class incoming white residents’ investments and speculative futures.

This discursive project was not without its detractors. Some posters questioned the politics of uniformly stating what the diverse neighborhood wanted. But, as seen in the debate about the development process explicated below, posts overwhelmingly championed “community” by reinforcing neoliberal tenets of upward distribution, hierarchicized difference, and obfuscation of inequity and oppression. To tease out these repeating themes, this section examines three aspects of the development debate: accusations of “playing the race card,” arguments about whether or not an earlier community planning charrette was representative of the neighborhood’s demographics, and the campaign to save and restore the Tivoli theater space.

Debates about the controversial RLA decision were hinged on defining the people of Columbia Heights and their desires. Equating an individual sentiment with the true desire of the “community” often allowed posters to promote a very specific development plan predominantly supported by the newly-arrived middle and upper-middle-class white residents. In September 1999, two months after the Horning and Grid proposals were

chosen, Cecile voiced her disgust, writing, “I am appalled at the decision announced today by the RLA board.... Here we are faced with a decision that will have a negative impact on our neighborhoods in the Columbia Heights area. What we have fought so long and hard for seems to have been totally ignored.” Cecile’s invocation of a hard fight for development references Columbia Heights residents’ decades-long fight to receive equitable governmental resources and commercial development. The “we” Cecile includes herself in is a “we” of firmly rooted Columbia Heights residents who have been faced with continuous disinvestment. But Cecile was not part of that we until recently. She moved to Columbia Heights only a few years before. Perhaps she is referring to the “we” of the Forest City advocates. Even still, her rhetoric, couched in “we” and notions of objective community betterment, presents a unified front of long-time and newly-arrived residents fighting for Forest City. In that moment, Cecile coopts the rhetoric of community activism that dates back to before the civil uprisings of 1968 and uses it to naturalize and promote a plan many saw as inequitably beneficial to middle-class, white owners’ interests.

In February of 2000, Alison offers a more accurate claim to a long-term relationship with Columbia Heights:

I have lived in this area for more than forty years. I was at Lincoln, Jr. High when 14th Street burned.... How many of you, when you criticize Horning and [Development Corporation of Columbia Heights] realize that after the riots, the only available development monies were earmarked for low and moderate income housing. The question of Minority participation is significant. The majority of Columbia Heights residents are people of color. Forest City corporate offices and Forest City in general does not have a strong record of minority employment.... Many have suggested that because Grid does not have the development history which Forest City has that ipso facto its work would be substandard. Read into this a distrust of minority businesses to perform to acceptable middle-class standards.

Alison's ties to the neighborhood do not give her an objective knowledge of what the "community" wants. And though Alison similarly cannot speak for some reductively envisioned mass of "longtime residents of color," the historicization of her experience is meaningful as is her explicit engagement with the racial politics tied up in the development proposal debate.

Most white posters do not name their whiteness and class status as things that shape their vision for the ideal, future Columbia Heights. Instead their privilege goes unnamed, perhaps making their universalist "community" rhetoric more convincing. Alison, on the other hand, notes her social location and implies that it is this experience that has shaped what she wants for the neighborhood, a desire more attuned to working-class African Americans rather than middle- and upper-class newcomers. Furthermore, her discussion of minority employment and empowerment elucidates one of the reasons many black residents were wary of the Forest City plan.

Even the developer, Joseph Horning, stepped into the fray to defend the support for his proposal, illuminating the influential status of the listserv among major actors in the development process. Critiquing Forest City proponents' fierce opposition he warns, "I would expect a wide array of opinions in a neighborhood with as broad a mosaic of ethnic and economic diversity as yours, but the mis-information, social rifts, and vicious maligning of people and community groups in your own neighborhood will take far longer to heal than any economic revitalization and construction might take." Though Horning's investment in defending Horning proponents is firmly entrenched in profit motives, he does make a reasonable critique of the listserv's damaging universalisms. Charles, the listserv administrator wastes no time responding to Horning's long post

defending why his proposal benefits more than just Columbia Heights' incoming middle and upper-middle-class. Charles issues the following corrective:

There are not a wide array of opinions. There are only two. There are those who support a particular kind of development-the charrette proponents. There is another much smaller group who are advocates not of a particular development but of a particular developer, namely Robert Moore. This nonsense about the wide array of opinions is just smoke to distract from the real conflict. There are not social rifts. This has been raised by some developer proponents and I condemn anyone who would use such divisive tactics to avoid questions of merit. It is an insult to those targeted and the grossest of insults against rest of the neighborhood. The majority population in the neighborhood is not racist, homophobic or resentful of income. I have lived in Columbia Heights for 26 years and what people care about is character, not skin color or sexual preference or how much money one makes. I am shocked that you would allude to such villainy.

Charles's post reads as a statement of fact: the entire neighborhood likes one of two proposals, all but a "small group" support Forest City, and there are "no social rifts" in Columbia Heights. The comments' claims to truth erase the actual truth that Horning invokes: there are divergent opinions shaped by social location throughout the neighborhood. Furthermore, Charles uses the word "small" to describe a group popularly associated with low-income residents of color, at that point the majority of Columbia Heights's population. This elides the reality of demographics while simultaneously rendering the majority of Columbia Heights marginal and inconsequential.

Charles also denies that anyone is racist or homophobic or resentful of income. Not only does this comment deflect criticism that has been lodged against him (racism,) it also assumes that Charles can speak for residents of color. Naming homophobia is most likely a reference to blacks' wariness of incoming white gays, but as a professed heterosexual, Charles may also be deflecting potential criticism of his own attitudes towards gays.

Charles shuts down the invocation of difference (i.e. race and class tensions) as a distraction to the “real” issues, which just so happen to be aligned with propertied white residents. Naming and fighting against racial and class-based injustice becomes “smoke” used for misdirection. Ironically, calling it “smoke” is itself much more closely tied to misdirection. Though the abstract embrace of a like-minded community transcending petty bickering is admirable, naming the persistent difference-based marginalization that takes place on the micro, meso and macro level is not petty at all. Charles’s rhetoric sets up a trap in which those who do not agree with the supposed smallness of issues such as uneven development are formulated as people who do not want a harmonious community.

Playing the Race Card

The equation of anti-racist critiques and anti-community well being can also be seen in invocations of the “race card.” The phrase alone- deployed disdainfully in analysis of neoliberal racist events from Clarence Thomas to OJ to Henry Louis Gates- is synonymous with subpar reasoning. The use of “race card” rhetoric forwards the assumption among Forest City supporters on the listserv that Moore’s claims to support a proposal that would most benefit *all* of Columbia Heights amounted to what Raymond called “winning the sympathy of a few Columbia Height's low-income residents with smoke and mirrors.” Similarly, in late February 2000, Tony tells the listserv:

I just wanted to say that I find it sad that people are willing to let something great pass them by because of the perceived benefit to a selected part of our community, at the cost of all others in that community. I find that if someone needs to play the "race card" in order to add validity to their ideal it only, in my eyes, shows just how little substance there is to start with.

In the logic Tony and Raymond set up, no one is going to confuse “playing the race card” with making a legitimate claim. It is minimized and ridiculed as a petulant move used to swindle people.²⁹ More often than not, rebuttals contain an offhand critique of what Gary dubs as a “very skewed racial prism” and what an anonymous poster calls “blaming the ‘great white father’ for everything wrong in your life.”

Discrediting accusations of racism sometimes played on popular fears about black activists. In February 2002, Julie reported on a meeting sponsored by the DCCH the progress of the Metro-centered development, decrying a speaker who gave, “a totally inflammatory speech that equated the interests of ‘them’ (i.e. white people, in essence) in Columbia Heights with the colonialism of South Africa and Zimbabwe.... He encouraged the group to take essentially any means necessary to discourage and confront the invaders into the neighborhood.” Whether or not the phrase “by any means necessary” was uttered verbatim by the speaker, the inclusion of the phrase conjures up alarmist associations with the Black Power movement. Her association activates the dominant politics of backlash that construct demands for rights as inappropriate and overly hostile for an allegedly colorblind society. Julie’s comment rests on unfounded assumptions that a strong opposition to displacement and disinvestment will turn violent. She also plays upon fears (seen in the previous section on crime) that black residents are already violent and dangerous. Though Julie is critiquing one specific line of reasoning, her logic of discrediting anti-racist/classist claims leaves little room for a legitimate claim of racial and class inequity.

The denial of anti-racist claims are not exclusively lodged by white residents. The listserv features posts by a handful of black middle and upper-middle-class residents that

support Forest City. Their defenses of Forest City often include the denial of racism among Forest City proponents. In September of 1999, Steven argues it is time to “make a stand against race politics and cronyism,” something he calls “D.C.’s homegrown form of cancer.” His critique is about more than Moore’s strategies specifically. It is another assurance that race is merely a mechanism to wrongly manipulate resident for profit. I also argue that Steven’s denial of racism as a black person further reinforces neoliberal ideology. Steven’s blackness becomes a way to authenticate colorblind ideology: if a black man agrees than it must not be racist.

Cynthia, an outspoken development advocate, uses this racial authority strategy much more explicitly in her own rebuttal to claims that Forest City proponents are predominantly white and middle-class. She posts, “they want to discredit us by claiming that we are a white, up-scale group, both of which are somehow bad. (I’ve been white and filthy rich so long, I’ve forgotten when I was black and poor – and anybody who knows my finances knows that I’m joking on both counts.)” Cynthia is a property owner and a prominent local neighborhood association leader with strong ties to the city government. Though her personal finances are unknown to me, it can safely be assumed that she is not in the same social class as several working-class and low-income Columbia Heights residents of color.

More important than Cynthia’s strategic self-identification with a group that does not necessarily fit her status is her multiple denials of inequity in the Forest City proponents’ stance. Her strategy’s success relies on an odd appropriation of social positioning. She uses her experiential authority as a black woman to legitimate systemic marginalization. Critique from white people is impossible because they do not share her

experiences as a black woman. Ultimately, her statements construct a kind of self-tokenization, manipulating (her own) race and perceived class.

Designing the Future

In late 1997 the D.C. Office of Planning helped facilitate a neighborhood charrette. The charrette provided an opportunity for residents (though not exclusively Columbia Heights residents) to share their ideas for the development of Columbia Heights concurrent with the opening of the Metro subway station. Though the charrette predated any development proposals, Forest City proponents argued that that proposal best encapsulated the charrette's conclusions that were largely focused on encouraging local business and mixed-use business and residential areas. When the RLA chose the Horning and Grid proposals, supporters of the Forest City proposal immediately used the results of the charrette as "proof" that their interests represented neighborhood consensus. This led to a debate about the representativeness of the charrette. More specifically, it became a contentious fight over the definition of Columbia Heights's white, black, Latina/o, poor, working, middle and upper-middle-class residents. While some questioned the exclusions in the charrette process, a larger number of posters rhetorically equated the charrette conclusions with universal consensus thus naturalizing the interests of predominantly white, middle and upper-middle-class incoming property owners.

In October 1999, Ivy posted, "it seems to me that with all the meetings and the charrette that is what the people want. Not to honor this 3 year process, is a slap in the face of the Columbia Heights Community." In this post, the population of Columbia Heights, subsumed in the formation of "the community," is assumed to be Forest City

proponents not to mention the assumption that charrette supporters would automatically support Forest City.

The charrette was not just privileged as a more complete artifact of neighborhood consensus it was formulated as the *only* available evidence. In October of 1999 Charles notes, “the charrette process is the only thing we have to determine community will. The charrette sessions consisted of three sessions and then a public announcement downtown.... If a sizable portion of residents do not agree with the charrette, where the hell were they when the charrette took place?” Charles’s comment operates within the logic that the vocal support of Grid and Horning’s proposals among residents of color was somehow less official. Consensus, in other words, can only be produced within organized meetings set up by established institutions. Not attending the charrette is figured as an actively anti-democratic choice. Not attending is choosing to forfeit one’s right to a legitimate opinion about development.

Jonathan, brings up a discrepancy in Charles’s logic:

I have a question that might seem stupid to some but I will ask it anyway. When were the meetings for the charrette held and why wasn't it advertised to entire Community of Columbia Heights? I've been living [here] for 20 years and the first time I heard about a charrette and community meetings was... earlier this year....I have spoken with some of the other older Black neighbors on the street who also knew nothing about these meetings.

Jonathan’s post implies that there is something suspect in the demographics of the majority of people who “chose” not to attend, i.e. predominantly working-class residents of color. Beyond the fact that often marginalized residents feel disconnected from and alienated by the government and that some residents do not have the ability to take off work to attend a community meeting, Jonathan illustrates how the charrette

announcements were not effective in spreading the word to his working-class black neighbors. For Charles, though, the focus is not on listening to residents' views (e.g. listening to someone who wasn't able to attend the charrette), it is on supporting official artifacts that most represent his interests while minimizing all other claims.

In October 2000, Don wrote a post that fought against the dominant argument that a) the charrette was representative and b) the charrette should be equated with consensus. "Good or bad, right or wrong," he states, "the charrette did not represent a good cross section of Columbia Heights." In a later post he writes, "The charrette I attended was older, Whiter, less Hispanic than Columbia Heights in general. I did not see many of my neighbors there or people I had recognized." Charles responded, asking Don, "so why didn't your neighbors come? If they had different priorities how can anyone know about them if they don't participate in civic events?" Again Charles relies on the faulty logic that not coming to the one charrette held automatically disqualifies a neighbor's voice. Not surprisingly, those disqualified voices were often working-class and low-income residents of color. But again, according to this logic, the debate has nothing to do with race, ethnicity or class. This was about choice and personal responsibility.

Perhaps the most reasoned conceptualization comes from one of the most powerful members of the listserv: D.C. Council member Jim Graham, representative for the ward that encompasses Columbia Heights. He wrote:

Contrary to perhaps your view, and various others, this is not a united community on this question. I don't know what the split is, but I know there is a split. Presenting this as the community wants this or that, just isn't contributing. The fact of the matter is that there is a deep division in Col. Hts on this question. It is true that the charrette and its recommendations is an important credential, and one that I respect. But it doesn't conclusively resolve the question either.

As someone who interacts with numerous constituents on a day-to-day basis, Graham is aware of the tension many posters want to deny. Assuredly, he is also aware of the ways race and class play into this disconnect. I am not arguing that Graham's politics are necessarily anti-racist/classist, but his comments demonstrate the importance of a wider, critical lens to examine what the population of Columbia Heights wants.³⁰ As Graham points out, the most important thing is to at least recognize that there is discord. That is the first step in moving towards a more democratic development process. Charrettes represent one particular part of a flawed planning process and, while Graham does not explicitly name the exclusion built into the charrette process, he acknowledges that it is only part of a messier whole, rather than the metonym for neighborhood consensus that white middle and upper-middle-class property owners want it to be.

Saving the Tivoli

The development debates were especially heated surrounding the proposed plans for the Tivoli theatre, a movie house built in 1924. The establishment was whites-only in the first decades of its operation, but became a theater popular with black residents in the 1960s through its eventual closure in 1976. When development in Columbia Heights began gathering steam in the early 1990s, a war about the future of the Tivoli was waged among residents on and off the listserv.

White newcomers tended to argue that that theater should be preserved, whereas longtime residents tended to support proposals to renovate part of the structure to make room for a much-needed supermarket. Residents opposed to the supermarket plan (which was always going to leave parts of the theater intact as a historic theater), successfully

stalled development by filing for the theater to receive landmark status. The debate between the two groups was often framed in terms of race and class, with African Americans arguing that a theater did not reflect the needs of the community in the way that a supermarket did.

In addition to contemporary racial and class tensions, the Tivoli had a history of exclusion, spending half of its life as a segregated theater. Correcting Charles's celebratory history (used to forward the Save the Tivoli cause), Janice wrote in November 1999:

Thank you very much for the history but you forgot to mention the negative racial background the Tivoli has. You forgot to mention that Black people were not allowed to go to the Tivoli until after desegregation. If we are going to tell the history of the Tivoli, tell the entire history and not just the parts that makes it look good to those who don't know about its entire history.

Beyond questions about its re-use, Janice questions the investment in saving the building as a celebrated landmark. What does it mean when predominantly white preservationists fiercely advocate the preservation of a formerly segregated building located in a majority black neighborhood without substantively reconciling its racist past? Janice works to remind the listserv of this often downplayed history and its contribution to potential racial tensions.

By late 1999, "Save the Tivoli" sentiments proliferated on the listserv, with many of these posters also identifying as Forest City proponents. Steven wrote that, "even the idea of sodomizing a historical neighborhood landmark such as the Tivoli by converting it into a Giant Food store is downright tacky." Later in March of 2000, Tony posts pictures of the theater's interior, prompting Felicity to exclaim, "Excellent photos, Tony! What a beautiful building. This is a no-brainer. Save the Tivoli. Period." The emphatic

“period” girds her statement against counterarguments about making the majority of the theater space a new supermarket. In both comments aesthetic value is formulated as objective proof that the building should be saved, thereby squelching the supermarket plans.

I do not contend that historic preservation or adaptive re-use is inherently problematic. I do, however, argue that some posters advocating for the Tivoli used preservation as an instrument to shut down a contentious development debate embedded with racial and class conflict. By naturalizing preservation as a universally appealing goal, Tivoli advocates painted opponents as illogical and, worse, opposed to beauty and culture. This villainization further marginalized claims from a number of working-class residents of color that prioritized a decades-long fight for quality amenities over architecture and art.³¹

Preservation efforts like “Save the Tivoli” are closely tied with the upscaling of disinvested neighborhoods.³² Planning historian Dolores Hayden notes that, “preservation at the local level in most cities and towns tends to the adaptive reuse of historic structures by local real estate developers, with little public access or interpretation, and often involves gentrification and displacement for low-income residents.”³³ It is not coincidental that those advocating preservation of the Tivoli happen to be predominantly middle and upper-middle-class property owners, many who recently bought in the neighborhood. Hayden also points to politics of access within historic preservation. Though she is primarily concerned with expanding public history, her statement can be applied to Tivoli advocates’ ideal plans for the theater, discussed in a moment.

Listserv comments such as Steven and Janice’s also fit within a historical tradition

of deploying rhetorics of aesthetics to forward racist and classist ideologies. These arguments reinforce an investment in dominant conceptions of beauty and civilization that favor those at the top of difference-based hierarchies (whites, the wealthy, the West, etc.)³⁴ This kind of building fetishism overshadows the concerns of the people moving through the built environment.³⁵ Furthermore, these discussions about beauty take place within a spatial context of a disinvested neighborhood. Rhetorics of ugliness and blight have been historically used to marginalize and further neglect low-income residents who inhabit these spaces.³⁶ These ideas haunt the rhetoric of the Tivoli's beauty, implicitly calling other racialized development plans ugly and uncivilized.

Bruce Johansen's ethnography of residents in the neighboring suburb of Silver Spring, Maryland also sheds light on the politics of historic preservation. He argues that these debates involve "competing stories that help [residents] to make sense of changes occurring."³⁷ The reasons for preserving and the kinds of things residents wanted preserved in the "revitalization" of Silver Spring demonstrate how residents are "making sense" of the area and its history. It can be a way to embrace the diverse history of a neighborhood or it hold onto "visions of a simpler, more socially homogenous past."³⁸ The Save the Tivoli campaign was willing to preserve a similarly exclusionary past. The theater's segregated past is coupled with the fact that preservation was used to block the development desires of longtime residents of color. It is no surprise then that Save the Tivoli was seen as a direct assault on longtime residents of color.

Debates surrounding the proposed uses of the building were classed and racialized. Art and culture, like the politics of aesthetics, are entrenched in hierarchies of difference. Responding to Councilmember Lawrence Guyot's explanation that some

residents valued a grocery store over a cultural center, Steven posted:

The idea that something, such as a community art center as being, ‘the sort of thing for white folks’ something that black residents have no use for. This is a crippling notion that discourages creativity, undermines the potential of it's [sic] youth, and denies the inspiration that this community desperately needs. This is what we've been hearing from advocates who claim to represent the black community. As a centerpiece of community, and economic development the Tivoli could provide this sort of long-awaited inspiration, as well as a symbol of redemption and continued awareness for a community that for too long has been victimized by racial divisiveness.

Steven's post imagines a cultural center that will work to serve residents across race and class lines, even working to erode some of those lines. His critique of Guyot's explanation, however, assumes that residents who care more about grocery stores are somehow less valuable members of Columbia Heights. He also fails to acknowledge Guyot's underlying reference to the fact that cultural centers like theaters and museums are often expensive and are surveilled and patronized by a majority white and/or middle and upper-class clientele, thus alienating people of color and/or working-class people.³⁹

Steven's comment hints at the possibility of a substantive dialogue about these long-standing racial and class disconnects and conflicts. But, echoing the neoliberal ideology throughout the listserv's development thread, Steven and other Tivoli advocates reductively cast the opposition as backward-thinking, “race card” deploying outsiders with little legitimate claim to the neighborhood's future.

Gentrification and Other Bad Behavior

Arguments about difference and belonging often hinged on reasons why residents choose to live in Columbia Heights. Residents would sometimes present their own, unprompted explanation for why they value Columbia Heights. Often these explanations

were made in defense of one's character after a critical post appeared about neighbors who did not care about the "community." I would like to briefly discuss these conversation trends, as they more explicitly create a discourse about things like gentrification.

These conversations were important for incoming middle and upper-middle-class white residents because they were able to define a "good" kind of middle and upper-middle-class newcomer and a "bad" kind. These conversations named two main types of neighbor: those that care about diversity and the success of the community as a whole and those who moved to the area for real estate profits, convenience, and want nothing to do with the Columbia Heights "community." Moving beyond the accusation that all middle and upper-middle-class people being indicted in the gentrification process, this categorization of neighborly intent shored up certain posters' sense of belonging. The assumption is that those that critique bad neighbors are implicitly good neighbors. These conversations also prompted some white residents to "come out" as gentrifiers, providing a platform and context to fight back against anti-racist/classist critiques.

Before relaying some representative conversations surrounding the ethical expectations of Columbia Heights' residents, I want to briefly present some debates over the definition and prevalence of "gentrification." As I have discussed earlier in this document, gentrification is an amorphous term that has varying definitions and connotations. Most posters did not define what they meant when they invoked "gentrification," but more often than not the word was used negatively to represent a development process that benefitted some while neglecting others. Some residents

acknowledged and lamented it, others denied it, while others still acknowledged uneven development while denying it was shaped by racism.

The term itself was often inextricable from certain associations with difference. The common stereotype was that white middle and upper-middle-class incoming residents (often, but not exclusively gay men) are the “gentrifiers,” whereas those falling victim to this migration were working-class residents of color. In August of 2004, Aaron forwards a different take on the word, writing “‘Gentrifier??’ Now-prevalent DC code word for a certain race or political affiliation. I now see this term as being as vile as any racial epithet.” A year later in August of 2005 Jeremy, a white man, voices a similar sentiment, arguing “the term ‘gentrifier’ is thrown about this listserv like other words that are generally not used in polite society, but by racists and homophobes.” The new conceptualization of the word is about reverse racism, an unfair and hurtful insult lodged against white newcomers.

Aaron and Jeremy appropriate a history of discursive violence deployed by denigrating words in order to apply it to a term associated with uneven development. Jeremy’s inclusion of homophobia also sets up the word as something presumably deployed by residents of color against white gay men in the neighborhood. The association of gay men with gentrification villainizes a whole population that identifies with a particular sexuality. Used in context of “reverse racism” debates, however, the critique of homophobia also reinforces a stereotypical assumption about homophobia in “the black community.”

Often times posts would forward a number of divergent ideologies at once. In December 1999, Charles posted a welcome letter for a gay male couple who had told the

listserv they had recently bought a house in Columbia Heights. Relaying him and his wife's own experience as a white couple moving into a majority black neighborhood, Charles writes, "although our neighbors were curious as to why a young white couple was moving into an inner city neighborhood we were accepted on the basis of how we acted and not by some preconceived notion of who we were." Here Charles shuts down any rumors that Columbia Heights is embroiled in a racialized turf war. In other words, white people should never think they do not belong in a particular neighborhood. In fact, later on Charles argues that, "no race has a right to a particular area - that is called racism," echoing a "reverse racism" ethos designed to minimize longstanding racial tension and displacement in the neighborhood.

Charles's warm welcome does contain a warning for these incoming middle-class people: "please do not buy into this urban pioneer nonsense. Do not think of having a mission to create a new kind of neighborhood. The neighborhood, like most neighborhoods, needs to be made better, not made different in any fundamental sense." Here he offers a nuanced distinction between improving a neighborhood for the sake of the neighborhood versus the upscaling of a neighborhood to solely benefit incoming residents.⁴⁰

In that same thread Tiffany, a relatively new black owner urged readers to acknowledge that racial tensions are part and parcel of gentrification. "To ignore this," she posted, "is to put your head in the sand. To proclaim that race makes no difference and that we are all alike is to be a fool." These conceptualizations of gentrification did not go unchallenged, prompting posters like Christopher to write in March 2002:

I think the answer to your question of how is gentrification occurring is simple: it's happening through normal attrition. When people move for

whatever reason (I bought my house from a family moving to Prince Georges County so they could feel "safer"), the person(s) buying the property make improvements.

Charles enters the fray, arguing that gentrification may exist but that “it is a matter of economics, not race. If more people find an area more desirable and the supply is inelastic (only so much housing available) then prices will go up. That is supply and demand, not race, at work. The increase in demand could come from whites, blacks, yellows, pinks, etc.” Charles’s incorporation of the whimsical group of “pinks” gently mocks anti-racist claims while his larger comments emphasize his neoliberal claim that economics are completely unrelated to race.

Peter does not shut down the linkage between displacement and race, but he does construct the problem as essentially solved, noting that “thankfully, property tax increases will be controlled to allow long term residents to continue to enjoy the improvements happening around the city. Affordable housing initiatives from the DC Council will help ensure that any new projects in the city will have units set aside to allow low-income renters stay in the area.”

In addition to downplaying the threat of displacement, these comments all rely on colorblind ideology in that they all downplay or deny the role difference plays in these issues. The listserv provides an outlet to discuss important issues, but a large portion of the posters use the conversation to render the rapid changes taking place in the neighborhood as apolitical, uncontroversial, and/or inevitable. As with all of these debates, however, neoliberal ideology may be dominant but it is not left unquestioned. Rachel, the woman who catalyzed the “piece of crap” critique, immediately rebutted Peter, arguing that the programs he mentions have failed to meaningfully redress

declining minority homeownership, while Kirk reminded Christopher that, “Gentrification is not normal attrition. Myself and some of my neighbors are not moving because we want to.”

Related to conversations about gentrification, some threads grappled with the expectations of incoming residents. The terms of the debate focused on whether or not a resident had chosen Columbia Heights because of its culture and diversity or because it presented an opportunity for convenience and profit. Posters that revealed they only moved for convenience and/or profit were met with disciplining posts. Privileging residents interested in helping “the community” implies a resident is ethically divergent from those catalyzing displacement and marginalization through gentrification.

For instance, an anonymous poster writes in October of 2001:

I love the ethnic, economic and social diversity of our neighborhood and I am struggling to find an affordable place to live in the neighborhood and have been for months. I own a house in another city and understand what it means to be a "landlord." I have spent most of my adult life working on community development issues-everything from housing to job and economic development and youth development.

This poster explicitly names diversity as a value worth being sustained through various social service projects and implies that other newcomers should be similarly involved.

The author empathizes with the struggles of working-class residents and would-be residents, lamenting the lack of affordable housing in the area. This empathy is countered somewhat given the later statement that the poster is a homeowner, a material fact that makes the poster distinct from those residents struggling to afford rental properties. The poster also advocates the value of getting involved in social service work, again empathizing with the struggle of marginalized residents and again assuming a potentially patrician role.

In a subsequent post indirectly referencing the proscriptive tone of the former comment, Oliver defends his involvement as follows:

I'm a lawyer. But what I also do for my community is: I rent my real estate at prices where not only does my property appreciate. So does that of my neighbors (including YOURS). I also keep my property clean, safe, and manicured. I take pride in homeownership and my community. I make an effort to make it unattractive for Wig Shoppes, Nail Salons, Popeyes, and Ames to set up shop. I support the opening of Starbucks, Giant (I sure hope they don't sell pickled pigsfeet, chitterlings, and the like that stuff freaks me out!), and most anything (especially gay establishments) that will propel our neighborhood to the position of Dupont, Georgetown, Chevy Chase, and Spring Valley. I'm here for the profit of my investment and the enjoyment of my ethnically diverse community.

Oliver adopts the rhetoric of “diversity” and “helping the community” but diverges from the previous poster’s conception of positive interventions. For Oliver, pricing his properties to exclude particular residents helps the neighborhood appreciate. The kinds of neighbors that would be ideally excluded are both classed, as evidenced by his defense of charging higher rents, and racialized, as evidenced by his denigration of black foodways and style. His championing of ethnic diversity is unreconciled with his racist critiques, illustrating the complexity of diversity rhetoric. Oliver was not opposed to all difference. He was much more open to the positive potential of gay residents, reinforcing the stereotype of the gay gentrifier and adding to the already contentious debate about the relationship of racism to sexuality and homophobia to race. Ultimately, Oliver is concerned with the betterment of the neighborhood, but this betterment is contingent on the removal of residents of color and/or low-income residents.

In January 2005, another conversation about the proper motives of incoming residents sprang up, this time centered on the “culture” of the neighborhood. After an anonymous poster questions the “culture” of Columbia Heights, a poster who identifies

as a “Columbia Heights Native” responds by telling the poster, “remember this is a neighborhood with much history (look it up) and diverse....Nothing against new residents moving just the ones that are ignorant complaining about everything. Because I know some people who take their time trying to get to know the community they’re in.” “Columbia Heights Native” shows one does not have to be an incoming resident to validate certain newcomers, subscribing to dominant rhetoric that middle and upper-middle-class residents can claim belonging in the neighborhood as long as they embrace it in its entirety.

The poster responded, “I’m so sick and tired of hearing all of this ‘culture’ and ‘neighborhood’ BS. The only reason I moved here is because of the Metro stop and sq. footage I could get for my money. Today, Columbia Heights sucks. The only reason I’m staying is because of the Tivoli and other development which will make it a better place to live.” Later in the thread, Julie sides with “Columbia Heights Native,” reminding the anonymous poster, “you did not move into a void. You chose to take your square footage which was cheaper because this is not homogenized and sanitized real estate only --- real people live and have lived here, generations, white and black and brown, have raised families here.” Julie critiques the poster’s elision of the history of Columbia Heights and defends the right of longtime residents to claim belonging. She simultaneously validates newcomers who come for the demographic heterogeneity, implicitly locating herself as someone who moved to Columbia Heights for all the right reasons.⁴¹

In this excerpted thread, two themes repeat. Posters like Julie and the “Columbia Heights Native” reclaim the history of Columbia Heights and construct a positive type of newcomer: one that cares about the demographically diverse population of Columbia

Heights. These statements also name and elevate the value of the marginalized residents some posters try to erase in their “no culture” comments. Yet a rhetorical commitment to fostering demographic diversity, as illustrated in chapter three, does not necessarily counteract the material effects of uneven development. Despite a stated investment in diversity, incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents were an integral part of the neighborhood’s rising housing costs and increasingly upscale development initiatives.⁴²

I am not arguing that all residents need to “prove” their commitment to working-class and poor residents or that all newcomers’ claims to respect longtime residents are rooted in deflecting guilt. These statements, however, potentially shield newcomers from reconciling their own place in and complacency with the processes rapidly changing the neighborhood. Ultimately, these posts are multifaceted, possessing the potential to both critique the discursive silences of neoliberal ideology and work as rhetorical obfuscations of sustained neoliberal development practices.

Sometimes, the listserv provided a space for newcomers to unequivocally “come out” as gentrifiers, vehemently rejecting the need to explain or apologize for their actions.⁴³ As a pseudo-public space with less risk associated with expressing controversial sentiments, the listserv sometimes became a confessional space for newcomers unwilling to grapple with racial and class tension any longer. Those “outing” themselves as residents uninterested in or sick of debates about gentrification, racism, and classism are not uniformly white, but do seem to be aligned along lines of social class given most were incoming homeowners and landlords.

In October 2000, Richard admitted that he does not “say I understand all the complex issues of race and culture, but I do not think that the ‘Middle-class’ should feel

guilty for moving here.” He continued to rationalize this absence of guilt, arguing, “I hear a lot of people talk of displacement, and such, but the fact remains, I did not FORCE anyone to sell their house to me. The person who lived here displaced themselves by putting the house up for sale.” Richard’s post may have made the listserv’s climate seem less hostile for others with similarly guiltless sentiments. Whatever the reason, his post prompted others to write similar things in commiseration and solidarity. Jim responds, telling the listserv, “it seems strange that some people should feel they have to apologize for buying and fixing up a home here, or have to spend there entire existence in Columbia Heights dedicating themselves to community service.... I don't understand why anyone would feel guilty unless they just really want to.”

Richard and Jim’s posts both express a lack of guilt but, in making the explicit denial, also acknowledge the contention surrounding neighborhood development. Otherwise, it would be unnecessary to publicize not feeling guilty. Both posts invoke the notion of choice. In Richard’s comment, displacement is not a matter of economic inequity, but a matter of personal will. It is not that Richard refuses to feel guilty for displacing residents. He does not feel guilty because he has retold the narrative of neighborhood change to erase any existence of forced displacement. His misstatement of economics does not deny a justified guilt, but rather frames his specific situation as not harmful and thus not worthy of guilt.

For Jim, the act of feeling guilty is a choice as well, a simple matter of will rather than an affective reaction to inflicting harm. Displacement, rising housing costs, surveillance and alienation of longtime residents are issues wiped clean in the beneficent visual of fixing up houses and setting aside a few moments of self-focused leisure time.

Both denials gesture towards the vulnerability they feel as newcomers forced into a narrative of hurting rather than helping the neighborhood. Lack of guilt rhetoric thus simultaneously silences arguments about inequitable development and re-writes spatial interactions. The end result is a neoliberal narrative in which persecuted middle and upper-middle-class (predominantly white) people exhibit strength of character by defending their benevolent actions.

This rhetoric uses a model of confession but, unlike the Foucauldian or even Catholic sense of the ritual, it is not in service of surveilling and controlling the confessor. Because the confessor/victim is in a dominant social class, the confession actually works to control those in lower socio-economic social locations. It appropriates and robs the import of marginalized residents' claims to victimization. Incoming residents who identify their lack of guilt erroneously construct themselves as victims of hegemonic urban social justice gone wrong. It is not a confession of guilt but a confession of persecution like noble heroes that eventually stand up to their persecutor to defend their progressive beliefs. These incoming residents exploit the power of narratives of unpleasant affective experience- shame, guilt, under-appreciation, and villianization- to generate sympathy and cover over their complicity in marginalizing others.

New Battle Sites: New Columbia Heights and NewColumbiaHeights.com

In January of 2008, someone wrote a post simply titled, "What happened to this listserv?" The poster went on to ask, "This listserv was once a very active and entertaining board.... Is this still a primary source for CH information and opinion exchange or is there a new board to which everyone has moved?" Ralph speculated that,

“the list self-destructed over participation and communications issues. Fed up people stopped writing. It's really a shame.” Meanwhile, Charles defended the continued vibrancy and relevancy of the listserv. Despite Charles’s defenses, the initial poster was right: listserv posts and conversation had dropped precipitously.

The number of posts dropped but, more interestingly, the amount of debate dropped. Gone were the days-long threads containing hundreds of posts about everything from a slur to the very nature of urban development. In the second half of the decade, crime reports received less and less comments. Racist diatribes still received a stray chastisement, but went largely unchecked. Though the Columbia Heights listserv is still an active site for conversation and debate it has changed along with the neighborhood.

I argue that the use of the listserv shifted slightly with an influx of private investment and middle and upper-middle-class, predominantly white residents. As populations and the built environment changed, the listserv was no longer used to construct belonging among newcomers. Furthermore, it became less of a place to critique the processes of change, perhaps because newcomers received enough reinforcements to be a more comfortably dominant presence in the neighborhood. As the upscaling of Columbia Heights became a reality instead of a distant promise embedded in housing rehab projects and development deals, the urgency in constructing narratives of belonging and difference declined.

Another component of the changing role of the Columbia Heights listserv was the popularization of blogs. Blogs are a related discursive site, but they are distinct in that they are a decentralized technology that can be employed by a wider number of people. They also diverge from a listserv in that they are less group-oriented and more focused on

an author's individual perspective, despite having a "comment" section. Recent blogs about Columbia Heights have not reached the popularity of the Columbia Heights listserv, but they do mark an important shift in the online culture of Columbia Heights.

I argue that blogs represent a shift to a new wave of incoming resident: white, middle and upper-middle-class, educated, and young.⁴⁴ These blogs' arrival also coincide (within the same month in 2008) with the culmination of the contemporary Columbia Heights development narrative: the opening of DC-USA, area luxury condo and apartment complexes, and higher-end restaurants and bars. The rhetorical construction of an imagined community continues in both blog projects, the aptly named "The New Columbia Heights" and "The Heights Life." The New Columbia Heights has accrued 750 posts and is solely authored by a 29 year old white man who moved to the city recently. The Heights Life has about 500 posts and is co-authored by two twenty-something white women who are also not originally from D.C., a testament to the transient nature of many of the city's young professional residents.

Both blogs focus primarily on new development that is rapidly spreading in the neighborhood: an excited post about a new bar here, a watch for an incoming Chipotle restaurant there. Despite these very specific social locations (young, white, middle to upper-middle-class) both blogs explicitly contend that they are "for the community." In a neighborhood engaged in a racialized and classed fight over equitable development, this rhetorical construction of a unified Columbia Heights elides and marginalizes a large portion of the community.

The very title of "New Columbia Heights" privileges incoming upscale residents and establishments. "The heights life" chronicled in both is exclusively a life of twenty-

something, white residents including photos of local social events with predominantly white clientele and reviews of higher-end restaurants. The coinciding circumstances of technology and changing demographics have led to a new era of discursive construction of Columbia Heights online. And, like the listservs, these narratives of belonging, territory, and difference resonate out to influence the material “site” of the neighborhood.

Columbia Heights becomes primarily defined as an enclave for young middle and upper-middle class professionals. This rhetorical map affects investment in the neighborhood. It encourages people to come out to the hot new bar and encourages other businesses to locate their hot new bars in the area. The city capitalizes on the success of these establishments and, given the zeal for upscale development, subsidizes more like-minded development. Like the supply and demand ethos followed by the corporations Washington D.C. continually favors, these maps of Columbia Heights chart who and what will succeed and who and what will belong. It encourages particular kinds of resource allocation and further neglects the desires of low-income residents of color. Where are the hot new spaces for low-income black and Latino/a residents to congregate? Where are the laundromats and decent schools to complement the green dry cleaners and gastropubs?

They are not welcomed into the spaces that are part of the “heights life,” considering the blinding whiteness in the photographic representations of the bloggers’ nightlife exploits. As evidenced by the listserv’s strand about El Rinconcito, the spaces at which they do frequent are under constant surveillance by police and newcomers. Besides which, even if they were constructed as legitimate patrons, low-income residents certainly cannot afford the amenities.

Conclusion: the Discourse in Discourse

Returning to the recurring theme of the potential of contact, does the Columbia Heights listserv offer the same productive “contact” that street-level interaction offers? In certain ways it mimics that contact, allowing for a casual and supportive network to be built from helpful and conversational posts. In other ways it is different, erasing the embodied elements that influence an interaction on the street: shaking hands, hugging, showing physical discomfort, etc. In certain ways it offers unique opportunities not common in street-level contact. Physical distance and anonymity have the potential to make respondents feel more comfortable giving their true opinions. A relaxed sense of propriety can lead to rhetorical violence, but it can also lead to a more honest conversation.

Ultimately, though, there remains a major difference between the contact of the streets and the contact on the listserv. The listserv is a self-selected group of people with access and a cultural orientation to online community participation. As this chapter has shown, the members of the Columbia Heights listserv often disproportionately privileged the needs of incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents. The listserv therefore lacked the true heterogeneity of the actual neighborhood and limited the amount of contact between residents with divergent social locations. Though contestation was a major factor in the discourse on the listserv, the “contact” pool was not necessarily representative. It is not to say that the discussions on the listserv did not bring complex issues of difference to the surface or offer the potential to destabilize the neoliberal logics reinforced. The “contact” from the Columbia Heights listserv, however, is unique from

street-level contact as it is simultaneously more exclusionary and more open. Less people have the opportunity to interact with one another because not everyone that lives in the neighborhood posts on the listserv. On the other hand, those that do participate are able to interact with more frankness, often less worried about mores and etiquette.

Throughout the listserv posts, “contact” produced interesting interactions. Rachel’s discussion of the “three pieces of crap” was derided by some but it also got people to think of black youth as something other than dangerous entities to be policed. For all his gentrification apologia, Charles ushered newcomers in while encouraging them to respect longtime residents. As a final example, the organized fight for the Forest City development plan shows how contact among residents can lead to political action. What started as a few residents sounding off turned into well-attended protests. They did not succeed and I argue their organization actually reinforced uneven development; however, their trajectory reveals the potential of contact. Debates on the listserv might die out in a war of flames, but they might also create groups of like-minded residents and residents persuaded by someone like Rachel’s post. These groups could then fight for particular resources off-site and in meetings, planning offices, and in the streets.

The conversations that make up the listserv’s prolific and long-ranging archive provide a unique opportunity to examine the ephemeral interactions that construct ideas about Columbia Heights. As I have acknowledged, the posters involved with the listserv are not a representative swath of the neighborhood, but the terms and content of their discussions reveal a sustained battle over how difference and belonging were constructed for a neighborhood facing substantial demographic change and material development.

The listserv sits between the formal and informal. In tone (casual), style

(conversational writing), and frequency (often immediate responses), these threads resemble verbal conversations and other ephemeral street-level interactions. Because of the venue (a technology excluding many working-class and/or poor residents) and the players (i.e., ANC and CDC members and *The Washington City Paper*) it was also akin to formal “community” initiatives such as neighborhood meetings and development charettes. It is both a counterpublic that represents everyday discussions between residents and a public archive that left a material mark on the rapidly changing Columbia Heights. The listserv is a discursive formation that harkens back to the traditional definition of discourse: conversations among people. These conversations, like advertisements and planning documents, produce and contest definitions of Columbia Heights and how race, ethnicity, and class factor into these constructions. Ephemeral conversations in the material neighborhood produce meaning, but the conversations on the listserv produce a kind of “interaction plus,” played out on a public stage, able to be built 24/7 and archived for many people to read.

Because of the sheer number of posts, one analysis cannot capture the varying worldviews forwarded, let alone parse the meaning from seemingly apolitical posts reviewing restaurants, recommending babysitters, and giving house maintenance tips. What I have done in the preceding chapter is to highlight a ubiquitous neoliberal logic that sprung up in hundreds of posts in addition to the anti-racist and anti-classist critiques posted to counter that logic. The debate reveals the always unstable nature of hegemonic discourse, but it also reveals the power of rhetoric to promote a particular kind of urban development. What started as a fight online became a way to justify investment and policing tactics that disproportionately benefitted incoming white residents.

By using logics of colorblind racism and justifications of social inequalities, some newcomers were able to “build community” through the listserv. This imagined community re-defined Columbia Heights in ways that validated the arrival of newcomers and did so on the backs of longtime residents who were often denigrated as threats to personal safety and to the ideal essence of Columbia Heights itself. Even on the exclusionary listserv, however, longtime residents of color vocally resisted these moves.

Notes

¹ All posts were accessed at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/columbia_heights/ between September 2009- October 2009. Unless otherwise noted, I have included the dates of the posts' discussed in the text. The forum is public and accessible to all with Internet access. Despite this publicness, I provide some anonymity by changing the names of all posters as some use their full name and other identifying information. It is in that spirit that I only provide the forum's general web site and an in-text reference to the date of the posts and/or thread. Besides an occasional bracket to clarify the poster's statement, I have not changed any other language in the post including spelling, grammar, and style.

² I do not claim that all posters on the listserv are residents of Columbia Heights. Much like transient visitors interact with and shape space in which they do not live, the potential exists for non-residents to be a part of the Columbia Heights's online meaning-making project. Though many of the posters discussed here do claim residency, my arguments do not mean to imply that the listserv is exclusively for residents.

³ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, 28.

⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1994 (1984)), 56.

⁶ Gabriella Gahlia Modan, *Turf Wars*, 321.

⁷ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque U of New Mexico Press: 1996), 7.

⁸ Margaret Rodman, "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality," 643.

⁹ Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 176.

¹⁰ Karen Mossberger, Caroline J. Tolbert, Ramona S. McNeal, *Digital Citizenship: The Internet, Society and Participation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 9.

¹¹ Lisa Nakamura has lodged a helpful critique against now-standard "digital divide" arguments, illustrating the problematic binarism of "online" vs. "offline" that fails to account for what *kinds* of access which Internet users are capable. Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*, 176.

¹² Amanda Lenhardt, *Who's Not Online*, Pew Internet and American Life Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2000/Whos-Not-Online.aspx> (accessed 10/19/10).

¹³ David Bell, *Introduction to Cybercultures* (London: Routledge, 2001), 117.

¹⁴ Lisa Nakamura, *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3-4.

¹⁵ James E. Katz and Ronald E. Rice, *Social Consequences of Internet Use: Access, Involvement, and Interaction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 120.

¹⁶ Nancy Fraser, "Politics, Culture, and the Public Sphere: Toward a Postmodern Conception" in *Social Postmodernism*, edited by Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 312.

¹⁷ Barlow is referring specifically to blogs, but the technology and access of blogs is similar to other Internet tools such as listservs and discussion boards. Aaron Barlow, *Blogging America: The New Public Sphere* (Westport, CT: 2007), 3.

¹⁸ Margaret Crawford, "Blurring the Boundaries: Public Space and Private Life" in *Everyday Urbanism*, edited John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski, (New York: Monacelli, 1999), 25.

¹⁹ Dora Epstein, "Afraid/Not: Psychoanalytic for an Insurgent Planning Historiography," 212.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

²¹ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, 57.

²² Robin D.G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *The Journal of American History*, 80, 1 (1993): 76.

²³ Patricia Williams, *Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 22.

²⁴ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 114.

²⁵ Though not a specific response the Rachel's earlier claims of racism among white gay men, Joseph's story about being called a feminized and sexualized slur- "bitch"- illustrates an example of racism and homophobia among black youths. This further constructs young black males as the real perpetrators of difference-based marginalization.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

²⁷ The racial dynamics of the argument were asserted by ANC member Lawrence Guyot throughout local media. David Montgomery, "Ready for a Renewal: Redevelopment Gets Green Light," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 10, 1999, B01. This development battle was primarily cast in terms of white and black residents, specifically described as such in such articles as Jose Suiero, "Hispanics Want a Say," *Washington Post*, November 7, 1999, B08. In my research, I have found that the black and Latina/o residents did favor the Horning plan more than incoming white residents, though there was obviously cross over

between these groups and the development plans.

²⁸ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 2.

²⁹ And like mainstream character constructions of Moore and Barry, this equation of race and deceit also reinforces the demonization of blacks as inherently duplicitous.

³⁰ Jim Graham's political position has often been mixed. He has been an outspoken advocate for things like permanent rent control, but he has also advocated the majority of the upscale development in Columbia Heights. His core support base is predominantly white middle and upper-middle-class owners that began moving into the neighborhood in the late 1990s, which was when he was first elected.

³¹ The debate over a supermarket is especially politically relevant given the historic "grocery gap" in disinvested urban areas that denies residents access to quality, fresh, and reasonably priced food. See Policy Link and Food Trust, *The Grocery Gap: Who Has Access to Healthy Food and Why it Matters*, http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/k.A5BD/The_Grocery_Gap.htm (accessed 10/19/10).

³² For more on the history of historic preservation in Washington, D.C.'s (re)development, see Dennis Gale, *The Impact of Historic District Designation in Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Washington Area Studies, 1989).

³³ Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1995), 53.

³⁴ This is a literal and spatial example of Clyde Taylor's theory of "palace discourse" as discussed in Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves*.

³⁵ Dell Upton, "Architectural History of Landscape History?," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44,4 (1991): 195-199.

³⁶ John Kaliski argues that planners should revise their approach to development in disinvested areas, "when the designer begins with everyday reality and defines it as beautiful, existing situations become a starting point rather than a stumbling block." John Kaliski, "The Present City and the Practice of City Design," in *Everyday Urbanism*, edited by John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski (New York: Monacelli, 1999), 107.

³⁷ Bruce Johansen, "Imagined Pasts, Imagined Futures: Race, Politics, Memory, and the Revitalization of Downtown Silver Spring, Maryland" (Ph.D. Diss, University of Maryland, 2005), 39.

³⁸ Bruce Johansen, "Imagined Pasts, Imagined Futures: Race, Politics, Memory, and the Revitalization of Downtown Silver Spring, Maryland," 39.

³⁹ See Lawrence Levine's study of classism and racism in art and cultural institutions. Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁴⁰ While a nuanced critique, Charles's logic assumes that incoming middle-class residents and working-class and low-income residents will have universal desires for amenities. As made apparent in the Tivoli debate, this is often not the case, meaning that middle-class residents trying to make the neighborhood "better" threaten to make it "different" at benefit to them and neglect to others.

⁴¹ The language of "sanitized" real estate and "realness" fits within the rhetoric of urban grit and authenticity, whose racial and class problematics are discussed in Chapter three.

⁴² Here I am referring to the linkages between incoming residents on the listserv and initiatives such as the Tivoli restoration, zero tolerance policing, the protest of incoming homeless shelters, and various waves of support for potential upscale commercial establishments such as Whole Foods. Similar sentiments can be found in the ethnographic analysis presented in chapter three.

⁴³ My use of the term "come out" references the performative properties akin to queer people's "coming out" narrative. Like that narrative, it is framed as a liberating and positive truth-telling exercise that requires strength in the face of unjust persecution. I use the term slightly ironically, as I argue that the appropriation of this narrative is a neoliberal reversal used to reinforce hierarchies of difference. My use of the term in light of a gentrification debate often involving questions of gay male sexuality is also meant to suggestively tease out how intersecting markers of difference affect these debates. What are some of the multiple ways the term is deployed and for what political goal? For more analysis on the discursive meanings behind "coming out" rhetoric see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁴⁴ *The New Columbia Heights*, <http://newcolumbiaheights.blogspot.com/> (accessed 3/1/11); *The Heights Life*, <http://www.theheightslifedc.com/> (accessed 3/1/11).

CONCLUSION

THE DIFFERENCE IN DIVERSITY: A ROADMAP FOR MORE EQUITABLE SPACES

In Columbia Heights, the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) has been a citywide leader in Latino/a and black youth outreach since 1974. Starting from their roots as a local recreation center in the neighborhood they have grown into “a nationally recognized organization serving all low-income youth and families” in Washington D.C. and neighboring parts of Maryland.¹ The center provides housing, healthcare, employment and life skills training, tutoring, art programs, and other essential social services not available to most low-income families. In addition to the day-to-day services offered by the not-for-profit, LAYC is also outwardly political, lobbying for “just and fair immigration reform” as part of their main mission.²

The LAYC exists to serve residents in need; residents that have been left behind by disinvestment and uneven development in Columbia Heights and similar areas. LAYC provides services and resources that the state has been unable or unwilling to provide certain residents. Their focus is explicitly on low-income youth and families *of color*, recognizing these demographics’ continued struggle to receive aid amidst dismantled social welfare programs supporting decent housing, education, employment, healthcare, and nourishment.

In recent years, the clientele of the LAYC has shifted and is now predominantly African American. This change reflects the continued failure of the state to provide needed support to black youth and families in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. The shift, however, does not change the LAYC’s commitment to aid people of color that

have a unique legacy of oppression because of their race and/or ethnicity. Rather, the shifting clientele exhibits the flexibility the LAYC has developed to serve residents in need without losing sight of their explicit commitment to the needs of people of color. In the context of the neoliberal state, this mission becomes an act of political resistance against continued colorblind racism and upward redistribution of wealth.

The LAYC celebrates diversity. Walking into their facility in Columbia Heights, one would never confuse the organization for a somber and sterile facility for those who cannot afford necessary care. Their walls are adorned with colorful murals, illustrating the unity possible within one multicultural world (Figure 65). Children and teens at the Latin American Youth Center have branched out, painting murals throughout the city.



Figure 65. Mural at Latin American Youth Center offices.
(Photo by author)

There is also a mural painted on the low wall of a soccer field behind a Columbia Heights elementary school (Figures 66, 67, 68). Like the “comin and goin” mosaic, it also contains phrases from the charrette held leading up to the Metro station and surrounding development. Multi-racial faces accompany rhetoric similar to that of the Public Realm plans and incoming residents. According to the mural “Columbia Heights is.../Columbia Heights es...” lots of things: “diverse,” “a mix of cultures that is fascinating,” and something that’s “changing.” Perhaps the match up is coincidental, but the black face next to “it’s changing” does not look happy. Here, even on a colorful mural, “change” ambiguously references narratives of renaissance, gentrification, both, or neither. The LAYC murals on the walls of Columbia Heights look similar to the artistic representations of “vibrant” multicultural Columbia Heights seen in real estate marketing. It is what is behind the walls of the mural that sets the LAYC apart.³



Figure 66. Latin American Youth Center mural at 11th and Kenyon Streets, NW. (Photo by the author)



Figure 67. Latin American Youth Center mural at 11th and Kenyon Streets, NW.
(Photo by the author)



Figure 68. Latin American Youth Center mural at 11th and Kenyon Streets, NW.
(Photo by the author)

LAYC does not operate under the assumption that racial and ethnic difference is an asset that exists to punch up the urban experience. Latino/a and black youths and low-income residents are not conceptualized as a group that lends authenticity to the area. They are considered to be a population in need of resources that have been historically denied these resources because of systemic racism and classism. The Latin American Youth Center places difference *and* issues of equity at the center of its mission. Their work is compatible with a framework that values demographic diversity, but it does not flatten race, ethnicity, and class into forms of capital. Compared to the often empty rhetoric of planning documents and the glossy multiculturalism of real estate ads, the LAYC's embrace of those that make up Columbia Heights's "diversity" is an example of an investment in diversity that works to counteract inequality.

The D.C. Tenant's Advocacy Coalition (TENAC) has been operating as a volunteer-run not-for-profit in Washington D.C. for over 15 years. As explicitly stated in their mission statement, they believe that "tenants in unorganized rental buildings are open for abuse by landlords, rental agents, and owners. We will not rest until we see a tenants' association in every rental building in the city."⁴ TENAC offers a variety of services to aid tenants in their efforts to organize, fight landlords, and take advantage of tenant protection laws. The two main laws are the right of first refusal and rent control. The right of first refusal gives tenants the option to buy before a landlord evicts them to convert a unit or building to condos. Rent control is a system that caps the percentage rent can be raised at roughly 10%.⁵

These laws can be complicated to navigate. The D.C. government has an Office of the Tenant Advocate that oversees tenant's rights. Jim Graham, the D.C. councilmember

from Columbia Heights who is actively involved with TENAC, also shepherded new changes to the law that ensured tenants would receive literature that explained their rights from their landlord. Though these safeguards exist, the rights of tenants in actual day-to-day interactions are tenuous at best. Beyond the fact, discussed later, that rent control does not wholly prevent steady rent increases in gentrifying areas, tenants do not always know their rights. Landlords are required to provide information about rent control and yet there is little enforcement of this outside the formal grievance structure.⁶ The grievance procedure can take much more time than those tenants on the edge of financial solvency have. This issue is compounded in the case of one of Columbia Heights's fastest growing populations: immigrants who do not speak English as a second language.

TENAC provides active rather than passive aid and does so swiftly. They are first and foremost invested in the rights and well being of tenants, especially low-income tenants who are most at risk for landlord abuse. They operate a hotline for tenants in need of advice and clearly explain litigation process, first refusal, and rent control on their web site and hotline. They also lobby D.C. officials to ensure continued rent control protections, offering well-attended candidate forums every election cycle. In other words, TENAC helps tenants access existing protections built into D.C. legislation, but does so more thoroughly and effectively than the government.

TENAC is an example of a not-for-profit that is not influenced by the private-public investment ideology of some developers and planners. They consistently prioritize the needs of at-risk D.C. residents, devoting their collective energies to helping those who are not enjoying the "renaissance" of upscaling neighborhoods. Rather than ignoring

class disparity, they are an organization that places difference and issues of equity at the forefront of their efforts.

Both TENAC and LAYC illustrate the kind of organizational forces working against the inequity left in the wake of public-private development that disproportionately benefits middle and upper-middle-class residents. Not-for-profit organizations such as these are a vital part of resource distribution in Columbia Heights and Washington, D.C. An overreliance on these organizations, however, reinforces inequitable processes of capitalism. Miranda Joseph argues nonprofits are often metonymic for the community that they serve. Joseph critiques the “romance of community,” a longing for something outside capitalism, by illustrating how the concept of “community,” including its incarnation as non-profits, complements rather than destabilizes capitalism.⁷ This is not to say that non-profits do not provide valuable services or that they do not gesture towards a form of resource distribution more equitable than capitalism.⁸ But Joseph illustrates why solutions to structural inequality cannot stop with the support of non-profits. Supporting non-profits can take the responsibility to provide a social safety net off states and corporations.⁹

I opened with a description of TENAC and LAYC to close this dissertation with examples of innovative work that embraces difference and social justice hand in hand. TENAC and LAYC illustrate a way to deal with demographic diversity without commodifying it, simultaneously fighting structures that have used markers of difference to promote discrimination and disinvestment. But, beyond these organizations, a larger toolkit of solutions is necessary to combat inequality in Columbia Heights and similar

landscapes. This conclusion explores an array of macro- and micro-level strategies that would destabilize neoliberal development.

The critique of the discourse of diversity is a jumping off point rather than a purely intellectual exercise. Throughout this dissertation I have charted how particular representations of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class map Columbia Heights in ways that encourage ideological and literal investment and development that benefits middle and upper-middle-class newcomers at the expense of longtime working-class and low-income residents (mostly residents of color).

I have unpacked the relationship between different markers of difference and between these embodied social locations and the rhetoric of diversity. The rhetoric of diversity in planning documents and in real estate marketing has overlaid a representational map over the lived experience of Columbia Heights's demographically diverse residents. Developers' maps are linked to the markers of difference that move through the streets, but they often distort difference to sell uneven development in the neighborhood. Race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class are reformed as commodities. The manifestations of those markers of difference that threaten upscale development are erased from the narrative and, in the built environment, are policed or displaced.

Using ethnography to explore how difference works on the ground level, I have pinpointed the ways the intersections of difference challenge existing assumptions about a variety of urban phenomena from gentrification to street violence to community building. Longtime African American residents are not uniformly low-income victims of gentrification. Classism creates conflict between middle-class black residents and low-income public housing residents. Similarly, incoming residents that capitalize on uneven

development are not exclusively white. The draw of a more upscale, multicultural Columbia Heights has brought a number of middle and upper-middle class people of color. Violence is not solely enacted on the basis of racism, classism, or homophobia. Especially because of the neighborhood's array of multiple identifications, violence is influenced by all of these at once. The notion of neighborhood "community" crafted through the listserv does not create a wholly inclusive or solely exclusionary vision of Columbia Heights. Instead, the varying racial, ethnic, sexual, and class identifications produce conflicting ideas about who belongs.

The debates on the listserv are archived examples of the kinds of interactions that happen on a daily basis. Despite what planners and developers desire, Columbia Heights is ultimately shaped by the back and forth of dominant and counter discourses. This dissertation has charted the dominant neoliberal ideology that has maintained influence, but the investment maps it draws are constantly contested. The possibility for more democratic spaces lies in that contestation. The wisdom of residents that challenge neoliberal development has guided my own suggestive solutions for more equitable development. In addition to speaking out about what they want and need as residents, my respondents also revealed how their daily interactions with one another has and has the potential to shape uneven development. The very act of speaking out is political.

"Contact" between residents can be innocuous, but it can also represent a form of resistance. It is not, therefore, the solution to uneven development, but rather is a site that can destabilize uneven development and illustrate residents' continued agency and resistance. The powerful ideology in official texts tries to erase that agency and cover over the inequalities that residents articulate in their interactions with one another.

Looking at all my ethnographic interviews cumulatively, a trend emerges in which interaction is often the most consistent form of resisting marginalization. Longtime residents let newcomers know about the costs of gentrification. Queer people let homophobic residents know that civil rights are not a class issue. Middle-class black people let their white neighbors know that racial profiling damages the neighborhood. These and many other stories elucidated throughout the dissertation are examples of how contact is the main site of resistance to the dominant, neoliberal ideology that influences development in Columbia Heights.

There are a variety of sites that produce rhetoric that supports and simultaneously critiques uneven development: from fights about racism on the listserv, to exclusively upscale multi-racial bodies enjoying “new” Columbia Heights, to rhetoric of black empowerment disguising the state’s inaction, to new ideas about gay space in a multi-racial and mixed income neighborhood. There are several actors with varying degrees of power shaping the discourse: individual residents, people in need of social services, landlords, renters, developers, planners, sales people, and even the federal government. Now that a variety of interactions and power relations have been articulated and analyzed, I move to a discussion of what can be done to fight state-sponsored uneven development.

Conditions for Operation

Firstly, it is important to understand the potential pitfalls in finding ways to bring about change. Because this research project is centrally concerned with language, I am attuned to the power and limits of language in facilitating social justice. Before moving to

policy and ground-level suggestions, I articulate three areas that are cause for concern: the limits of acknowledgment, the quicksand of cooptation, and the problem of intent versus action.

Recognition of how race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class order socio-economic power relations is an important step to destabilize a system that is reinforced by the obfuscation of the role difference has in the maintenance of hierarchies. To change the way resources are distributed, one must first understand how inequity is reproduced in that system. Acknowledgment, however, needs to be coupled with action or else it risks becoming something similar to what Sara Ahmed calls a “nonperformative,” or a speech act that “works” by not doing what it says. In other words, acknowledging inequality could also be an endpoint, effectively shutting down future action and perpetuating the very systems of inequality condemned in the speech act.¹⁰

To say that inequality exists in Columbia Heights or even to say that the forces that support the inequality should be stopped is not tantamount to changing material circumstance. It can be because it remaps the neighborhood and can change investment patterns. But it can also stand in for action, implying that the individual or entity associated with the speech act is doing all that can be done, allowing the process to continue. Take for example, the Redevelopment Land Agency’s planning literature in the 1960s and 1970s. In these plans, the RLA continuously acknowledged the importance of serving low-income residents of color. Partially because of that rhetoric, their actual inaction and penchant for upscale development was hidden under a smoke screen of social justice rhetoric.

Acknowledgement can be a part of neoliberalism as a purposeful ignorance of inequality. Though the primary characteristic of neoliberalism, as defined by Lisa Duggan, is the obfuscation of inequity (i.e. figuring poverty as caused by luck or pathology rather than structural racism and classism), neoliberalism is part and parcel of a postmodern turn in which dissent is constantly co-opted to work for capitalism.¹¹ In other words, vocalizing a critique of inequality breaks the usual silence, but that critique can still be used to support the gentrification process.

Social consciousness is a vital part of the urban middle and upper-middle-class residents' milieu. From reusable shopping bags to Priuses to the *Huffington Post*, socially progressive gestures and artifacts bolster cultural capital by showing superior character and education. These gestures are almost always consumption choices made possible by capitalism rather than choices that challenge it. In some circumstances decrying poverty and gentrification supports rather than threatens the continued support of middle and upper-middle-class residents in urban areas.

Whether they are called yuppies (young, upwardly-mobile professionals), guppies (gay, upwardly-mobile professionals), bobos (a portmanteau of bourgeois and bohemian), or the creative class, progressive-minded people have become the group most associated with gentrification. They are therefore the group whose presence is most likely to attract upscale investment in the neighborhood.¹² Revisiting Miranda Joseph's argument, these residents make gestures toward redistribution through vocal support of and donations to marginalized people and the organizations that aid them, but this support can act as a supplement to capitalist wealth acquisition. In a way, it is capitalism that *allows* this progressivism, making some people well off enough to choose (rather than be required to

under the more accurate opposite of capitalism, communism) to give back to those bearing the brunt of capitalism's inequalities. This caveat does not invalidate the importance of volunteering, speaking out, or giving to nonprofit organizations. It does, however, complicate how rhetoric of dissent operates in the current moment. Understanding how easily dissent can be used to sell the very process it critiques fortifies future actions.

In a similar vein, the intention of residents is important, but it does not automatically work against uneven development. As some of my respondents and I myself pointed out, one's political orientation and even one's activism do not change the fact that walking down the street in Columbia Heights could reinforce the process of gentrification. To speculators and others interested in upscaling Columbia Heights, signifiers of whiteness and/or middle or upper-middle-classness illustrate that the neighborhood is primed for continued upscaling. These embodied markers of difference can also trigger anxiety in long-time residents who associate those markers of difference with threats of disrespect and displacement.

The muddy realities of cooptation and the ubiquity of uneven development are not signs that change cannot be effected or that white and middle and upper-middle-class people cannot be part of the solution. The process of development needs to be further examined and innovative ways to resist cooptation need to be conjured. For the purposes of this dissertation, the aforementioned caveats make up parameters of action rather than an obstacle to action. They are the warning label outside a toolkit assembled to build a more democratic and demographically diverse Columbia Heights.

Changing the Structure

Changing development in Columbia Heights requires a multi-prong solution that, to be wholly successful, would have to restructure nothing short of capitalism in the 21st century itself. It would have to change the state's investment in private industry, the maintenance of disparity left by the continued legacy of racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and class discrimination, and the continuation of modes of production that have concentrated wealth and exploited workers globally. All of these structures contribute to how Columbia Heights developed. Low-income residents of color continue to struggle with poor housing, educational, and employment opportunities. Industry has been outsourced and automated, robbing once-semi-skilled workers out of living wage jobs. The government has overseen the investment in a growing knowledge economy and the professional class of educated workers that run it. They are the primary focus of increasingly privatized, but government sanctioned development plans. To counteract the inequity these circumstances perpetuate would require a thorough redistribution of wealth and a change in our mode of production.

I do not harp on these large structural issues because I think that one dissertation or even one social movement can single-handedly solve global inequality. I reiterate this critique to illustrate the fact that uneven development cannot be solved with what Tom Slater calls the “quick fix” methods of framing public-private (often upscale) development as a solution to urban inequality.¹³ The discussion on fixing gentrification, schools, affordable housing, employment and other urban issues cannot ignore just how inextricably linked all these larger structures are. Schools cannot be fixed without addressing income disparity. Gentrification can't be discussed without addressing

employment opportunities. The links go on and on. These linkages should be embraced as part of the discussion, not discarded in order to build up the alleged effectiveness of a catch-all idea such as getting rid of teacher's unions and embracing charter schools or letting low-income people get paid more to do creative things like hairdressing.¹⁴

The following suggestions are laid out alongside the belief that the deep roots of capitalism are, again, a parameter not an all-out obstacle. These suggestive points are just that: suggestions. I do not claim to know the detailed legislative fine print that guides what is and is not legally feasible in the current moment. Based on my extensive research and ethnographic inquiry, I nonetheless believe there to be several things that can help counteract uneven development. I loosely classify these suggestions into three sections: reframing the ideology surrounding development, shifting the power balance between residents and developers and city officials, and increasing social welfare.

Firstly, the focus of development needs to be shifted towards residents who need the most support from federal and local governmental entities. Revitalizing the neighborhood should be about revitalizing the neighborhood for its longtime residents in addition to incoming residents. It should not be about making a neighborhood attractive to middle and upper-middle income residents and allowing a select number of longtime residents to stay.

The move towards public-private partnerships and the wooing of middle and upper-middle income tax revenue were products of decreases in funding that prevented the government from effectively helping low-income residents.¹⁵ The shift to private, often upscale development was justified as a means to an end, a shift that would garner revenue to assist low-income residents. The way development progressed throughout the

1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, however, has made the satisfaction of private developers and their middle and upper-middle-class consumers as an end in and of itself. The inclusionary zoning laws and other protections meant to funnel these new investments to assistance programs pale in comparison to the state-sanctioned distribution of wealth and property to wealthier residents and developers. Largely private gentrification has become a legitimized development strategy with some unfortunate but seemingly bearable collateral damage, rather than something to be curbed in favor of regulated public and private development that serves low-income residents without access to resources first and foremost.

City officials can change standard development models so that the state allows private developers to develop particular areas, rather than a private developer allowing a state to give it millions of dollars to develop in a disinvested area. There is a fine line between a state playing to the reality of incentives in the private development market and abandoning the state's role in protecting the interest of constituents through regulation. The construction of the Major League Baseball (MLB) stadium in Washington D.C.'s Near Southeast neighborhood in the mid-2000s is a telling example. Negotiation between Mayor Anthony Williams and the MLB went from Washington D.C. offering the MLB a prime location for one of its franchises to the city council and mayor bowing to MLB demands and threats, agreeing to use over \$600 million in public funds to construct a stadium.¹⁶

The Tax Increment Financing (TIF) method used in the development of the DC-USA complex is another example of the disproportionate profit the state willingly generates for private developers. TIFs have been used to entice development since the

federal and local funding of urban development severely dissipated in the late 1960s and 1970s. In this case (as in others) the city issued \$50 million worth of bonds to DC-USA's developer, Grid Properties, to subsidize the construction of the complex.¹⁷ The city now takes a percentage of the sales tax generated by the site's lessees (e.g. Target and Best Buy) to pay back the bonds issued.

It may seem like TIF zones pay for themselves, and no doubt this is part of how they are successfully spun to some residents. In actuality, the tax revenue that the site generates is being directed to a specific bond instead of the general municipal coffers.¹⁸ This means that there is less money to reinvest in the neighborhood and less money to fund social welfare programs that would aid those residents in need. In both these examples, more safeguards must be put in place to ensure a higher amount of revenue is going towards social welfare programs and that less public money is being diverted to build private, for-profit sites. I maintain an overarching, Foucauldian distrust of the state and state power, but I also think that, in the current moment, the state has a responsibility to wield that power to safeguard people who have been denied resources.¹⁹

Planning spaces should involve the input of many residents. Plans should build on input at community forums, but they should also be built on ethnographic findings and conversations with residents. As this dissertation has shown, often times the input at community meetings does not accurately represent the desires and fears of a large swath of residents. Citizen participation needs to be rethought and expanded to include different kinds of listening and different priorities. It should be planners' and developers' responsibility to get input from a large swath of residents. This goes beyond announcing the meeting on billboards or online. Planners and developers need to employ door-to-

door canvassing, postering, multi-lingual outreach, and other innovative ways to notify the whole public.

Planners and residents also need to reform the idea that those who do not participate in forums forfeit their rights to direct development in the areas in which they live. There may be financial and personal reasons why someone is unable to attend. But even if a person is absent because they do not want to attend, planners have the obligation to try harder to solicit their opinions. Furthermore, owning or renting property in a neighborhood should not be the only characteristic that gives a respondent clout. Many people are off leases, are undocumented, are homeless, or they spend large amounts of time in Columbia Heights despite not residing there. It is difficult to create an exact definition of who has a right to weigh in on development in Columbia Heights, but it should include people who have a stake in Columbia Heights despite not having a financial investment in the area.

The citizen participation process should not be a process solely led by developers, planners, and city officials. The input given by residents in the planning stage should more often be incorporated into final plans. In my research, I found that resident input actually influenced a very small amount of redevelopment plans. More often, participation was logged and celebrated in press releases and reports rather than incorporated into the built environment. Citizen participation will rarely lead to consensus, but there can be ways to innovate the process and include more residents' desires.²⁰ The citizen participation process should be a challenge planners are eager to tackle to better incorporate all feasible resident requests. It should not be conceptualized

as a quagmire that is a waste of time or an unfortunate necessity, as it has historically been discussed at the Redevelopment Land Agency.²¹

To strengthen the input and influence of low-income residents and/or residents of color, I suggest continued collective action. This includes smaller, already established organizations such as the Advisory Neighborhood Commission and nonprofits such as the D.C. Tenant's Advocacy Coalition. It is also groups that form briefly out of a specific need, such as Nigger, Inc., Build Black, and MICCO. Though resident desires will conflict, finding a way to create a group for strategic collective action could influence planning decisions and development deals more than individual dissent. These groups are especially necessary given the influence of groups that have led the charge in gentrification efforts such as Save the Tivoli, an organization that used historic preservation concerns to stymie development plans favored by working-class and low-income black residents.²²

Washington D.C. has laws designed to protect the rights of low-income residents. The laws' intention, however, does not always match up with the reality the laws engender. Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) allows for roughly 10 to 20% of units in a particular building to be set aside for affordable housing.²³ While this number is not insubstantial, affordable housing should be a right for all residents, not just those fortunate enough to make it off affordable housing or the affordable housing voucher waiting list. At present, there are over 30,000 people on Washington D.C.'s waiting list.²⁴ Despite economic constraints, the government could be doing more to sanction development that provides much more affordable housing stock. Even upscale development built on an empty lot, or

industrial site (and thus did not directly displace affordable housing) still eliminates 80% or more of a space that could have possibly provided affordable housing.²⁵

Part of the rationale of IZ also has to be rethought. City officials in Washington, D.C. have touted IZ as a way to “eliminate concentrations of low-income and substandard housing.”²⁶ Eliminating substandard housing is an important goal, but spatial concentration is too often represented as the main problem. Arnold Hirsch, Steven Gregory, and Rhonda Williams have shown that areas with a concentration of low-income residents like public housing projects often engender strong communal ties and support systems.²⁷ The rhetoric surrounding “concentrated” low-income communities and “the ghetto” perpetuates stigmatization and pathologization of low-income communities.

Planners and city officials should expend more energy trying to combat the larger structural issues that lead to crime, violence, and drug use in low-income communities. Employment opportunities, living wage ordinances, better graduation rates, and other initiatives are bound to have a bigger effect on crime than the proximity of other low-income people.²⁸ A shift in this thinking could lead to innovative public housing plans that would provide a high quantity of housing without sacrificing quality. In addition to reintroducing funding for public housing, the same zeal to create innovative, eco-friendly, cheerful spaces for middle and upper-middle-class residents should be applied to public housing.²⁹

Housing lotteries, loan programs, homesteading programs, and other incentives to offer affordable housing and facilitate first time home ownership need to primarily benefit people who are actually low-income. Historically, the income requirement for individuals to be a part of these programs is well above the poverty line.³⁰ For instance,

the popular Homestead Housing Preservation Program, now defunct, sold hundreds of abandoned properties. Through a lottery, people could buy abandoned properties for as low as \$250 provided they agreed to live in the houses for five years and had the credit to get loans to bring the house up to code. Often times, these properties required tens of thousands of dollars worth of repairs. Even with the \$10,000 secured loan for those fortunate enough to have good credit, the costs associated with the renovations often made the lottery program either a) too much of a financial boondoggle for low-income residents who had to forfeit the houses or b) state-sponsored gentrification, allowing someone with good credit the opportunity to rehab a house for eventual profit.³¹

Inclusionary zoning is a more recent example of relatively high income caps. Income qualifications for an IZ affordable unit is 50 to 80% of the Annual Median Income (AMI).³² As of 2010, the AMI for a household in Washington, D.C. was \$103,500.³³ That means that individuals making between \$35,950 and \$57,500 and households of four making between \$51,750 and \$82,800 would potentially qualify for some form of housing assistance.³⁴ Those on the high end of that cap are not wealthy and benefit from regulation that ensure those entitled to IZ units only pay the recommended 30% of income on rent.³⁵ Given the increased need, however, of those who struggle near or below the sufficiently lower threshold of poverty line, government should prioritize those at the low end of the income ceiling.

Furthermore, income level cannot be the only factor that calculates an individual's financial status. Projected earning potential based on occupational and educational experience needs to play a role in determining eligibility. For instance, because I am a graduate student, I could qualify for several low-income social programs that have been

offered over the years. Despite the steady decline of careers with salaries that make a humanities PhD a savvy investment, I will most likely be making more than double my current income in a matter of a few years. The same can be said for educated professionals in apprentice positions like editorial assistant and marketing associate “putting in their time” before getting a high paying job up the corporate ladder.

The same cannot be said for someone without a college or high school degree making the same as my current salary in the service sector with little chance for substantial advancement. In the former scenarios, a program that, on the surface, is helping a low-income tenant/owner, is now being used to forward upscale development. It creates a state-sanctioned profit opportunity for a resident whose presence and consumption choices within the neighborhood lead to further gentrification. All of these variables need to be in place to ensure these programs have the most benefit to the people most at-risk for homelessness and financial insolvency.

The condemnation of properties that do not meet housing and health standards needs to be reframed as an opportunity to help low-income residents, both the residents in the units and those in need of affordable, quality units. When Mayor Anthony Williams began the “hot properties” list in 2000, it was billed as a way to crack down on absentee landlords in violation of code.³⁶ Landlords purposely let code violations pile up to make more profit and/or encourage residents to vacate in order to upscale the property and make a higher profit. While city officials were successful in convicting some landlords, the hot properties list often had the opposite effect of its stated intent.³⁷ Rather than protecting low-income residents, the condemnation of a property often displaced residents unable to afford quality housing. Furthermore, once condemned, the properties

sometimes became higher-end units: the exact outcome the landlords desired. In 2001, a property rented by mostly Latina/o tenants was condemned and residents were given three hours to vacate. That property was then converted into condominiums that sold for \$400,000 per unit.³⁸ Though a new landlord was now reaping the benefits, the condemnation process did not primarily aid low-income residents in need of affordable housing.

Rent control laws, another safeguard to ensure affordable housing are a valuable resource, but they should be one strategy amongst many. Rent control laws aid tenants, but they are not designed to eliminate skyrocketing rents. These laws just slow them. Rent control typically prevents rent from being raised more than 10% for tenants previously holding a lease. It also protects new tenants by prohibiting a unit's rent from being raised more than 10% from that of the previous tenants' rent. If the unit is vacant, and this is where the safeguards run the risk of being insufficient, rent can be set no more than 30% higher than comparable units.³⁹ This provision can lead to a chain reaction: a \$1,000 comparable unit allows a neighboring vacant unit to go for \$1,300. A second neighboring vacant unit can later go for \$1,690.

The rising prices of rents are most certainly slowed by rent control laws and the need for landlords to stay with median prices in the area to garner tenants prevent prices from rising immediately and exponentially. Prices in increasingly attractive neighborhoods do, however, rise. They rise fast, whether it is because of new inhabitants, new luxury amenities, or new retail destinations. Solely investing in rent control legislation as a way to curb the affordable housing crisis creates the false impression of solving a problem that still continues.

Changing the Street

Though new regulations and policies that protect low-income people are the most effective in redistributing resources such as housing, education, and employment, this dissertation has also charted how intrapersonal interactions and neighborhood networks often play an important role in shaping power relations. My analysis of texts and residents' experience reveals that there is a politics of knowing. My conceptualization of knowledge as resistance is especially indebted to Patricia Hill Collins's discussion of black feminist knowledge production and its role in challenging structures of oppression. Like Black woman's situated knowledge, the knowledge marginalized residents possess because of their standpoint contributes to an oppositional consciousness. That consciousness can weaken dominant narratives that justify the inequitable development.⁴⁰

Knowing how development actually happens matters. I found that, often times, residents who had been marginalized by the process often knew this the best. Low-income residents, residents of color, LGBTQ residents and all combinations of those identifications adeptly pinpointed how difference was used in neoliberal development. As a note of comparison, some of the newcomers I spoke with did not seem to know how uneven development has been. Or, if they did know, they did not seem to frame it as a priority.

By cumulatively examining the conversations I had with various residents, I conclude that there is a valuable difference between understanding uneven development and being lulled by the false ideology of planning documents and marketing. For instance, Michael understands that the increased surveillance of public housing residents infringes on their quality of life. On the other hand, Rowan views public housing as the

site of potential criminals that need to be removed from the neighborhood. Valerie and her neighbors remember the D.C. public school system fondly, despite its flaws. She sees that the mass firing of mostly black school teachers negatively affects trust between black residents and city officials. Though she has African American roots, Shaunna views the school system as a no-go: something that will take her and her husband out of the city when their daughter becomes school aged.

Social location did not necessary delineate who talked about inequality and who reinforced dominant neoliberal ideology. Newcomers critiqued gentrification and longtime residents reinforced race and class hierarchies. The larger conclusion I draw from my ethnographic inquiry is that social location did matter. Furthermore, talking or not talking about inequality also did matter. Often times those that “knew” were more likely to act accordingly.

Though action does not automatically reverse inequality, residents made their voice heard in community meetings. They voted for candidates with the best track record on issues facing longtime residents (despite some of those candidates subsequent inaction.) They also told their neighbors about history; about injustices that have and continue to take place; about a Columbia Heights that did not just crop up as a diverse creative-class playground like those depicted in ads. Knowing may not be the whole answer, but not knowing automatically limits solutions.

Moments of “contact,” offer ways to destabilize the logic of gentrification and transmit knowledge about. These moments may not have the potential to completely shift the inequality in current development strategies, but they do lead to opportunities for the creation of social support networks and organized coalitions that aid residents. These

moments also give working-class and/or residents of color the chance to challenge and resist middle and upper-middle-class residents' assertion of territorial superiority.

To link my discussion of contact with my discussion of development solutions, I suggest that there could be ways of creating sites of more productive contact, but doing so remains an elusive task. As evidenced by my interviews, contact is a ubiquitous component of living in a densely populated neighborhood such as Columbia Heights. Changes in the built environment should first address the needs of all Columbia Heights residents, but creating public spaces that foster contact would also benefit the neighborhood.

The pot-luck and block party concepts forwarded by respondents such as Mary and Ryan suggest potential sites that would engender interaction between varying groups. These spaces could be the traditionally romanticized public areas such as parks. Parks in Columbia Heights remain segregated. There are dog parks that primarily attract white newcomers, a soccer field popular with Latino/a residents, and parks mainly frequented by longtime black residents. There is no simple way to integrate these spaces and the proprietary nature of each speaks to larger tensions along lines of race and class. In some ways, having their own "turf" provides a space in which black, Latina/o and other marginalized residents can feel comfortable congregating somewhere that is "theirs."

The easiest way to encourage public spaces that appeal to a number of different residents would be to provide something that all residents enjoy. However, there is no unifying foodstuff, musical group or activity that will magically bring people together to talk. Efforts to plan such an event can reinforce the exact kind of superficial

multiculturalism that covers over tension in the neighborhood.⁴¹ Often times integrated spaces spring up organically.

Presently, one of the most integrated leisure spaces is the new International House of Pancakes that opened in the DC USA complex in 2010. On any given day there are white professionals, college students, Latino construction workers, black families, gay couples, and any number of other people enjoying a meal. On the surface, championing a chain pancake restaurant as a utopic, integrated space seems contradictory. It is a minority owned franchise, but it is a far cry from the mom and pop establishments or free, public spaces often lauded in discussions of inclusive urban environments. IHOP, though, is one of the few spaces that seems to support interaction between groups. Again, that interaction may stop at chit chat, but it may also become something bigger. The example of IHOP illustrates how difficult it is to plan spaces for contact, especially considering productive contact can be aggressive and not the kind of friendly talk suited to a diner environment. Sites of contact are ephemeral and shifting. Ultimately, this project primarily focuses on finding ways development can provide resources to a wider swath of residents and on the sites of contact that residents' have already brought into being.

Throughout this dissertation, I have offered specific examples of productive contact that have left ripples affecting how identity and space are shaped. Elizabeth, a white newcomer gets to know her black neighbor and they help one another with yard work and the like. That friendship has led Elizabeth to question the upscaling of the neighborhood. That wariness is reflected in how she votes and the community meetings she once attended. Theresa, a lesbian of color, encourages an elderly heterosexual black

neighbor that LGBTQ rights are not just an issue for white middle-class men changing his idea about the queers of color in his own community. A Latino listserv respondent questions a racist assumption about Latino culture, not allowing racist logic to become the accepted norm of online Columbia Heights. These moments can change minds and changed minds can lead to a more inclusive and equitable neighborhood. To end, I would like to offer a few hypothetical examples of contact based on my ethnographic encounters. These examples parse out the potential and limits of what micro-level contact can do.

Bob, a 24-year-old white heterosexual male, has just moved to Columbia Heights at the end of graduate school last May. Bob is from an upper-middle-class family that lives in a suburban area of Wisconsin. He has been in the neighborhood for 6 months. He chose Columbia Heights because of its proximity to public transportation and because it is a hip neighborhood with lots of other young, professional men and women. There are at least six bars in the neighborhood that he frequents, all with a similar clientele. He does not plan to stay in Columbia Heights or the city for more than three years, but he is excited to enjoy the time that he has here.

His neighbor is Lisa, a 60-year-old African American who has lived in Columbia Heights since birth. She is currently a supervisor at the local Target. Her mother was a secretary in a government office and, though she struggled to raise her family on one salary and some help from the government, her mother kept her house and, when she recently died, left the house to Lisa. Despite the crime and drugs that took their toll on the Columbia Heights community over the years, Lisa is proud to live in the neighborhood in the house in which she grew up.

One day, Bob steps outside his apartment to have a cigarette. He sees Linda on her porch listening to soul music on a stereo, chatting with her brother Carl.

In the first scenario, Bob and Lisa do not talk. They make brief eye contact but Lisa and Carl continue talking and Bob takes his cell phone out to check his email and text a friend.

In the second scenario, Lisa says hello to Bob. Bob says hello back. Lisa mentions the odd weather pattern they have been experiencing and Bob makes a joke about winters in Wisconsin. Carl jokes that Bob should wait until he has to experience the muggy summers. Lisa adds that Bob is going to wish he had a darker skin tone like her and Carl. Bob laughs, finishes up his cigarette, and heads back into his apartment wishing them both a good evening.

In the third scenario, Bob steps closer to Linda's porch and asks them to turn the music down. Linda, annoyed, tells him to mind his own business. Bob is offended as it is Sunday night and he feels it is an inappropriate thing to do when people have to get up and work the next morning. He tells her she is being disrespectful and, aggravated and looking for a way to channel this anger, he references a few pieces of litter on her lawn. He calls the house "trashy," and suggests she clean it up to show some pride in her neighborhood. Linda, now also mad, tells him again to mind his own business. She tells him to "go back where he came from," meaning both that she wants him to go back inside and that she wants him to get out of her neighborhood.

In the first scenario, nothing much changes. The potential for coalition and aggressive exchange is lost. Like a spatial example of the old adage "if you don't ask the answer is no," not interacting does not close down contact completely, but it closes

numerous doors. Lisa and Bob ignoring one another speaks volumes about the race, class, and generational issues in the neighborhood. It reinforces ideas about identity and territory. The silence, in other words, is productive. Yet, I believe that the second and third scenario can yield far more interesting results.

In the second scenario, Lisa and Bob form a short-lived connection that familiarizes them. From here, it could be that nothing happens. They could go about their business in the following days and weeks and not speak with one another again. Alternately, because of the rapport they have established, Bob and Linda could continue to talk while coming and going. This could stay at the level of casual acquaintance. Even if it does, however, a connection has been established that could lead to a teachable moment.

Perhaps one night Bob is out with his friends and one starts talking about all the “sketchy” Columbia Heights residents living in run down houses that are probably crack dens. Bob could reference Lisa and tell his friend that that’s an inaccurate representation. Perhaps he attends a community meeting in which Lisa stands up and demands that planners provide more social service centers in the neighborhood. Because they know one another, Bob could stand up and support her demands, forming a small oppositional coalition between the target and nemesis of upscale development.

Lisa and Bob’s friendly chats could give way to Lisa telling Bob about her family and the history of the neighborhood. Perhaps knowing Lisa’s history makes the history of Columbia Heights palpable for him. Perhaps it means that he sees Columbia Heights as a site of black and Latina/o social networks amidst continuing gentrification, rather than as a playground for recent graduates in town for a few years.

That knowledge changes how people approach the neighborhood and how they move through it. Maybe he will start talking with other long-time residents in the neighborhood. Maybe Bob will talk about the neighborhood differently to his friends and address the racial and class inequality that runs through the area. Maybe that will become a louder narrative than the urban playground narrative. That might make it harder for developers to draw upscale bars and restaurants to the neighborhood, leaving room for development aimed to serve a larger swath of residents. Maybe Lisa will join an organization designed to halt changing a community park popular with longtime black residents into a dog park. Maybe Lisa will tell the longtime black residents that have organized the group that not all newcomers are as oblivious as the dog park proponents. Maybe Lisa will ask Bob to help out and Bob will agree because of their previous interactions.

In the third scenario, contact could still be productive despite the aggressive tone. Bob could begin to question his previously unquestioned place in an unevenly developed neighborhood. Lisa could feel relieved that she stood up for herself, her family, and her stake in Columbia Heights. Perhaps Bob could feel guilty and start to see that this kind of interaction illustrates that Columbia Heights is not the revitalized, hip destination that he once experienced it as. Maybe this will spur action and he will begin to attend community meetings. Maybe venting her frustrations will inspire Lisa to do the same. Or, alternatively, maybe the interaction gives Bob a personal justification to agree when his friends call longtime residents trashy and reverse racists.

There are innumerable ways these scenarios could play out. I do not believe that contact automatically engenders some sort of larger action. It does not necessarily disrupt

entrenched ideas about black pathology or white people's imperial idea that they deserve to live anywhere they please. Even if ideologies of racism, classism, heterosexism, and gentrification are disrupted in someone's mind, it does not necessarily follow that this consciousness raising will shift the power dynamics or material development of the neighborhood.

My belief, though, is that it *could* do these things. As I have shown with this hypothetical exercise and with the stories residents shared with me, the dominant ideas about difference and development that shape Columbia Heights are routinely challenged and endangered in these moments. While these moments, both congenial and aggressive, have a potential to change things in Columbia Heights, that potential dissipates if residents avoid contact with one another. A lack of interaction can still be productive. There is contact in purposefully ignoring someone. Not interacting, however, reinforces the separate maps of Columbia Heights drawn along lines of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. In that scenario, Bob's map and Linda's map lay on top of one another. Historically, Bob's map has lain on top; desires of middle and upper-middle-class newcomers have been created, reinforced, and fulfilled far more often than the desires of working-class residents of color.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, I do not forward contact as a solution to uneven development. More accurately, contact is a product of the built environment, one worth investigating and describing because of its ability to reinforce and/or change the dominant discourses that shape Columbia Heights. Like planning documents, advertisements, and listservs, resident interactions are another site at which

knowledge about race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and Columbia Heights generally is produced and contested.

Contact is not an alternative to restructuring development practices. It will not force Washington, D.C. officials to regulate private development or provide more resources for the residents who have suffered the consequences of discrimination and disinvestment. My interest in contact is not part of a push to create harmonious communities. The desire to create harmony in Columbia Heights without changing the imbalance of power rationalizes existing inequalities. It urges working-class residents threatened with displacement to embrace middle and upper-middle newcomers despite the fact that that group disproportionately benefits from recent development. Contact can absolve a newcomer's role in gentrification, creating a scenario in which a newcomer's friendship with a longtime resident somehow counteracts one's role in supporting inequitable development. In other words, my investment in contact as a possible aid in fostering equality in Columbia Heights comes with a number of caveats. Street level interaction, political organizing among residents, planning, development deals, marketing, and local and federal legislation all work together to inform Columbia Heights' changing environment.

These parting words illustrate the specific things that could change this process to better accommodate all residents of Columbia Heights. Because the ads and planning documents are right when they exclaim that Columbia Heights is a vibrant, diverse neighborhood. That demographic diversity, however, is shaped by a discourse of diversity that has valued some residents and some identities over others. White newcomers, middle and upper-middle-class people, and LGBQ residents with the income

to properly gentrify have all been embraced. Working-class and low-income residents of color, both LGBQ and heterosexual, have continually been ignored, policed, and threatened with displacement.

Through this exploration of Columbia Heights' spaces, texts, and residents, I have shown that demographic diversity does have value. It just is not the limited value bestowed on it by ideologies that support inequitable development. The value is in the black residents of post-riot era Columbia Heights demanding representation in the planning process. It is in those residents of color erased in luxury condo marketing because they are not safely gritty or upscale enough. It is in the white queer man who moves to Columbia Heights to get away from the segregated gay enclaves of Dupont and Logan. It is in the longtime residents that fight online to keep newcomers from claiming ownership of the neighborhood and its development agenda. The demographically diverse built environment is friendly and harmonious at times. It is violent and confrontational at times. To me, the capital of diversity is in its potential to destabilize the very structures that commodify it.

Notes

¹ Latin American Youth Center, *Advocacy*, <https://www.layc-dc.org/index.php/programs/advocacy.html> (accessed 2/14/11).

² Latin American Youth Center, *Advocacy*.

³ The celebration of diversity forwarded by the LAYC is steeped in social justice action, however the material artifacts they leave behind could do different work. The murals do not explicitly address the social justice aspect of LAYC's mission and they could easily be incorporated as another example of diversity rhetoric used to perpetuate the gentrification of diverse Columbia Heights. As discussed later in this conclusion, the potential for cooptation and misappropriation are operating conditions that temper rather than preclude social justice work. Despite the negotiated readings possible, the mural still references a mission that critiques systemic oppression and does various outreach to actually work against the damaging rhetoric of neoliberalism

⁴ D.C. Tenant's Advocacy Coalition, *Mission Statement*, <http://www.tenac.org/content/mission-statement> (accessed 2/14/11).

⁵ Rent control law, newly amended in 2006, places limits on how much rent can be raised in a unit owned by a landlord in possession of more than 4 units. Rent increase can only be 2% above the percentage increase of the Consumer Price index, with a limit of a 10% increase. Similarly, a lease for a new tenant can only be raised 10% above the previous rent or the rent of a comparable unit. If it is a vacant apartment, the rent can be no more than 30% higher than a comparable unit. See Sara Gebhardt, "Getting a Handle on the District's Rent Control Changes" *The Washington Post*, Aug. 19, 2006, T9.

⁶ As anecdotal evidence, I have lived in two separate apartments in my 6 years of living in Washington D.C. and neither landlord (both owning more than four units) has ever told me or given me literature about my rights under D.C. law.

⁷ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 70.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁹ If non-profits are conceptualized as entities that help redress the exploitation of capitalism, their perceived effectiveness can shut down a larger critique of capitalism *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, "The Nonperformativity of Antiracism," 105.

¹¹ Lisa Duggan discusses the cooptation of radical social movements under New Deal corporatism. Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, xix. Frederic Jameson argues that cooptation is not even an appropriate term in the postmodern era because all dissent is

“disarmed and reabsorbed.” Because they operate within the cultural system they critique, they “can achieve no distance from it.” Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 49. Like Duggan, Mele, and Smith, I conceptualize cooptation as a danger and operating condition and not something that wholly stymies political activism and resistance to developers and the state.

¹² Though the etymology of these terms is beyond the scope of this study, for a representative exploration of this demographic see David L. Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper-class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001). Brooks argues that the new class represents a merging of the bourgeois self-interest seen in the yuppies of the 1980s with the liberal ideals of bohemians in the 1960s. I use these definitions to refer to young, educated, middle and upper-middle-class, urban residents. They are often white, sometimes gay, and usually socially liberal (i.e. pro-gay rights, pro-environmental protection, pro-choice and maybe pro-affirmative action.)

¹³ Tom Slater, “The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research.” 585.

¹⁴ Two such ideas were the underlying interventions of *Waiting for “Superman”*, directed by Davis Guggenheim (Walden Media, 2010) and Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, respectively.

¹⁵ This is not to claim that, if given the fund, the government would have helped these people effectively. As evidenced by my earlier discussion of the War on Poverty and other Liberal programs, discrimination and ineffectiveness is prevalent in many social welfare programs. However, resources and funding are a baseline requirement for this kind of work.

¹⁶ David Nakamura, “D.C. Finance Chief Approves Council’s Stadium Spending Cap; Baseball Must Agree the City Won’t Pay Overruns, Gandhi Says,” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 14, 2006, B04.

¹⁷ Debbi Wilgoren and Dina ElBoghdady, “Target Fills in a Blank; Retailer Plans to Anchor Columbia Heights Shopping-Entertainment Complex in 2005,” *The Washington Post*, Sep. 5, 2002.

¹⁸ This was the case with the Columbia Heights TIF district and others throughout the city and the nation. Jackie Spinner, “District Can’t Sell Bonds for Big Projects; TIF Policy Changed to Reassure Investors,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2001, E01.

¹⁹ Though this seems like a contradiction to embrace Foucault with one hand and the Liberal state in the other, I reconcile the two sentiments by viewing these interventions as a mélange of actions that help people in the short term and those that critique hierarchies maintained by state power. This is a juggling act that has numerous hazards. It is possible to spend time and resources that could be spent dismantling capitalism on band-aid solutions that reinforce it. Realistically, a global anti-capitalist revolution is not

happening in the near future thus anti-capitalist critique should be coupled with more immediate solutions that take care of people's everyday needs.

²⁰ There is no easy answer as to how to listen to the conflicting desire of residents and then design an inclusive plan. At the very least, planners need to fight for that goal.

²¹ Mapping the extent of this wariness of citizen participation in the planning field is beyond the scope of this dissertation. This is not a blanket statement indicting all planners, as many are invested in citizen participation. My statements are in reference to specific sentiments uncovered in my research, repeatedly expressed by Washington D.C. city officials and planners. See also Howard Gillette, *Between Justice and Beauty*, 187.

²² Though I imagine these collectivities to have no demographic requirements for membership, I also believe that allowing working-class and low-income residents lead these collectivities is essential. Their desires are underrepresented and disproportionately attacked by the organizations that lead development processes thus they should be at the forefront of the fight. This sentiment relates back to issues surrounding the easy cooptation of activism among incoming middle and upper-middle-class residents.

²³ The exact number depends on the bonus density agreements. A developer often receives a favorable zoning modification in exchange for offering a higher number of affordable units. DC Department of Housing and Community Development, *Inclusionary Zoning Implementation*, <http://www.dhcd.dc.gov/dhcd/frames.asp?doc=/dhcd/lib/dhcd/services/iz/iz-summary.pdf> (accessed 2/24/11).

²⁴ Harvey S. Jacobs, "Housing Vouchers Can Help Both Tenants and Landlords," *The Washington Post*, Aug. 7, 2010, E1.

²⁵ Assuming IZ requirements apply, which would only do so if the building had ten or more units. DC Department of Housing and Community Development, *Inclusionary Zoning Implementation*.

²⁶ D.C. Office of Planning, *The Comprehensive For the National Capital*, 2006, 5-18.

²⁷ Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing*; Steven Gregory, *Black Corona*.

²⁸ Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*, 106-127; Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*, 99-123.

²⁹ This is not to imply that public housing designers have purposely built unimaginative, low-quality housing. The evolution of public housing has always had an eye toward innovative designs and this impulse should be encouraged and improved. Alexander von Hoffman notes that planners' faith in public housing design housing has been so prevalent that he argues design is often a panacea for solving more systemic problems. Alexander von Hoffman, "High Ambitions: The Past and Future of American Low-

Income Housing” in *New Directions in Public Housing*, edited by David P. Varady, Wolfgang F. E. Preiser, and Francis P. Russell (New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1998), 4.

³⁰ The 2011 poverty level, as set by the Department of Health and Human Services is \$10,890 plus \$3,820 for each additional household member. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *The 2011 HHS Poverty Guidelines*, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml> (accessed 2/24/11).

³¹ Cindy Loose, “Homes Almost for the Asking; Lottery Winners to Pay \$250 for Vacant Houses,” *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2001: J01.

³² DC Office of Planning, “Planning IZ Mapping Analysis” (Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, 2006), 9.

³³ Fannie Mae, *2010-2011 Area Median Incomes*, <https://www.efanniemae.com/sf/refmaterials/hudmedinc/> (accessed 2/24/11).

³⁴ DC Department of Housing and Community Development, *The District of Columbia Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning Maximum Household Income Limits*, <http://www.dhcd.dc.gov/dhcd/frames.asp?doc=/dhcd/lib/dhcd/services/iz/izincomelimits2009-08-04.pdf> (accessed 2/24/11).

³⁵ DC Department of Housing and Community Development, Office of Planning, *Inclusionary Zoning Implementation Act of 2006*, <http://www.dhcd.dc.gov/dhcd/frames.asp?doc=/dhcd/lib/dhcd/services/iz/izimplementationactof2006codified.pdf> (accessed 2/24/11).

³⁶ Isaiah J. Poole, “Slum Kind of Wonderful,” *Washington City Paper*, Nov. 14, 2003, <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/articles/27528/slum-kind-of-wonderful> (accessed 2/13/11).

³⁷ Neely Tucker, “Apartment Landlord Sentenced; Community Service Completes Deal with D.C.,” *The Washington Post*, July 13, 2000, B01.

³⁸ Carol D. Leonig, “Tenants’ Suit Accuses D.C. of Prejudice in Evictions; Gentrification Caused Ouster, Hispanics Say,” *The Washington Post* April 14, 20014, B01.

³⁹ Sara Gebhardt, “Getting a Handle on the District’s Rent Control Changes,” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 19, 2006, T9.

⁴⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 13-19.

⁴¹ See Brett Williams’s discussion of the failed attempt to integrate residents at an urban multicultural street festival. Brett Williams, *Upscaling Downtown*, 121-144.

APPENDIX A

ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW PROMPT QUESTIONS

Guiding Questions for Chapter Two

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Why did you initially choose to live in Columbia Heights?

This is an exercise that some city planners have used. Could you name five words or phrases that describe Columbia Heights?

What do you like about Columbia Heights? What don't you like?

What do you think makes a good neighborhood?

Could you tell me a little about how you understand the history of development in Columbia Heights from the 1960s onward? (General impressions or specific.)

Could you tell me about your experience with the planning? Have you attended any meetings or talked with any neighbors, developers, or government workers about development in Columbia Heights?

If not, was there a particular reason?

If so, did you have a positive experience?

How do you remember the government's approach to development in past years? Has it gotten better? Worse?

Who has been responsible for these changes (both good and bad)?

To what extent do you feel included in the development process (city and private developers)?

In regards to the planning and development of Columbia Heights, is there anything all neighbors agree on? Are there any planning and/or development issues they do not seem to agree on?

If you were to imagine an ideal future for Columbia Heights, what would it be?

If you were to imagine an undesirable future, what would it be?

What do you think it's going to be like, realistically, in 5, 10, 20 years?

Guiding Questions for Chapter Three

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

What are the boundaries of Columbia Heights?

How would you describe the neighborhood?

This is an exercise that some city planners have used. Could you name five words or phrases that describe Columbia Heights?

Describe a typical day in the neighborhood.

What are some of the places that you frequent in the neighborhood?

What are some places that you do not frequent or avoid?

What drew you to Columbia Heights?

What kind of people live in Columbia Heights?

Tell me about your interactions with your neighbors.

How do you conceptualize the relationship between Columbia Heights and the city in terms of services, police action, development, etc.?

Do you see any tensions or coalitions in the neighborhood?

How would you compare Columbia Heights to other neighborhoods in the city?

Do you think you'll stay in Columbia Heights? Why or why not?

Do you have any suggestions to make Columbia Heights better?

If you were to imagine an ideal future for Columbia Heights, what would it be?

If you were to imagine an undesirable future, what would it be?

What do you think it's going to be like, realistically, in 5, 10, 20 years?

Guiding Questions for Chapter Four

Tell me a little about yourself.

How would you describe your sexual orientation or identification?

How long have you been living in Columbia Heights?

Why did you initially choose to live in Columbia Heights?

Did you ever consider moving to another neighborhood that has a visible gay/lesbian presence, such as Dupont or Logan? Why or why not?

This is an exercise that some city planners have used. Could you name five words or phrases that describe Columbia Heights?

What do you like about Columbia Heights? What don't you like?

What do you think makes a good neighborhood?

How have you found your experience living in Columbia Heights as an LGBTQ person?

Have you had any positive experiences you'd like to share?

Have you experienced any problems here?

How would you characterize Columbia Heights' LGBTQ population?

How big is it?

Do you note LGBTQ residents' presence?

Where do you spend your leisure time?

To you, what makes a "gay and/or lesbian neighborhood"?

Would Columbia Heights fit that description? If not, what is it?

Do you spend time at establishments that cater to LGBTQ?

If not, why not?

If so, can you describe your experiences there: what you enjoy and what you don't enjoy about these spaces?

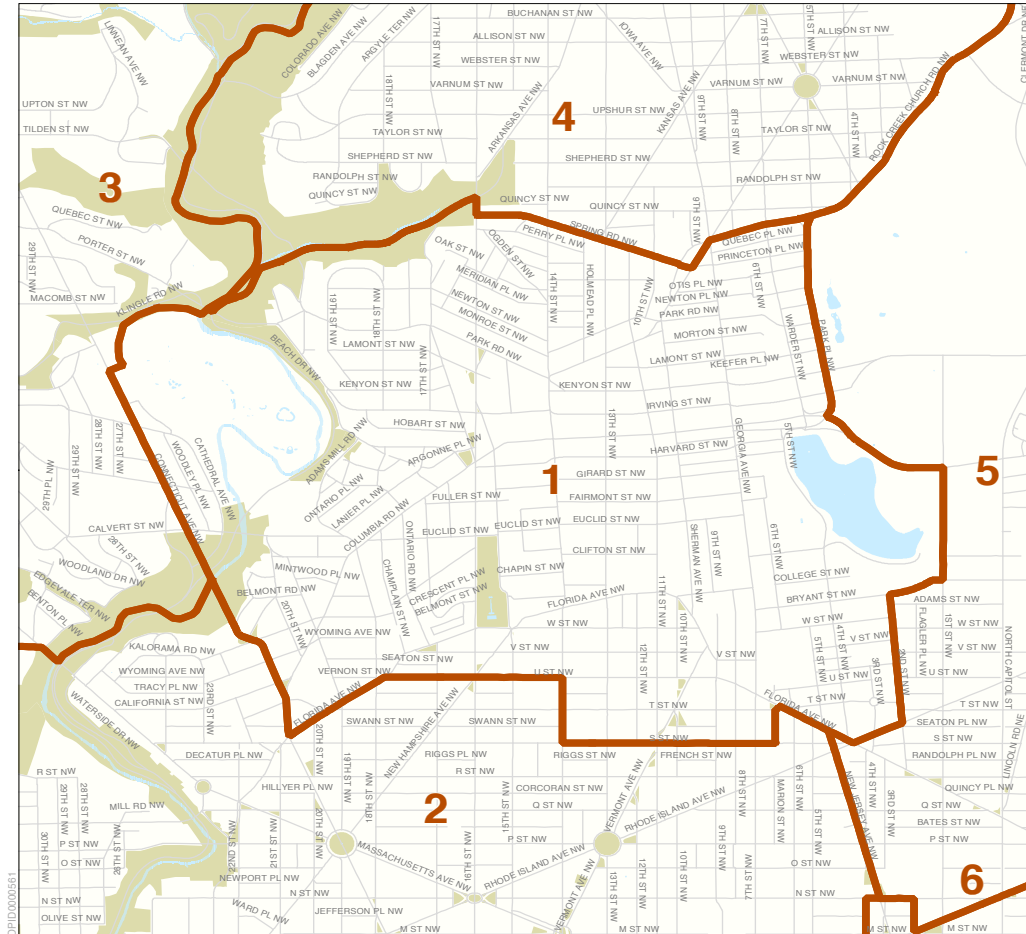
If you were to imagine an ideal future for Columbia Heights, what would it be?

If you were to imagine an undesirable future, what would it be?

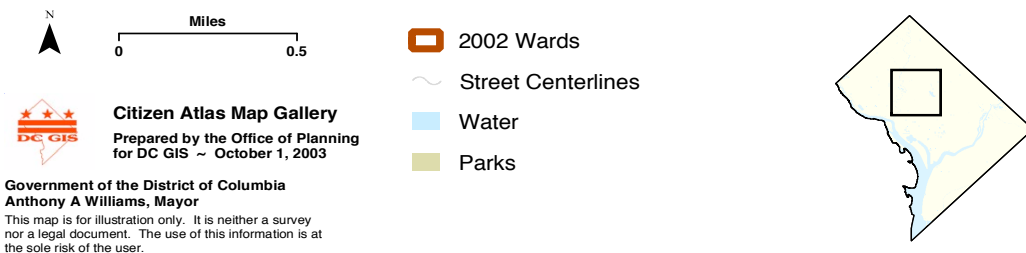
What do you think it's going to be like, realistically, in 5, 10, 20 years?

APPENDIX B

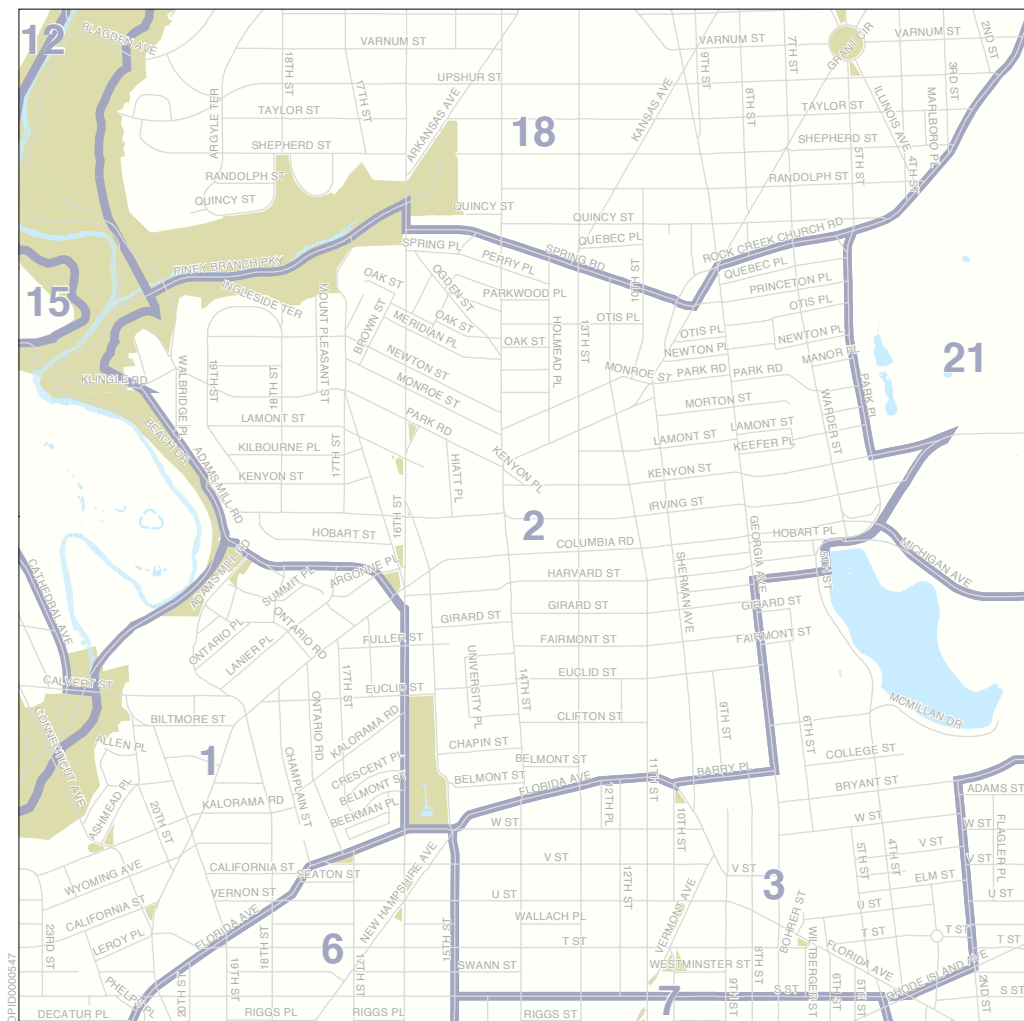
MAPS OF OFFICIAL DISTRICTS THAT INCLUDE COLUMBIA HEIGHTS



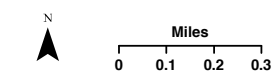
Ward 1



Ward One. Wards are used to determine representation on the D.C. Council and Advisory Neighborhood Commissions
Washington D.C. Office of Planning, <http://planning.dc.gov> (accessed 3/1/11).



Neighborhood Cluster 2



Citizen Atlas Map Gallery
Prepared by the Office of Planning
for DC GIS ~ October 1, 2003

Government of the District of Columbia
Anthony A Williams, Mayor

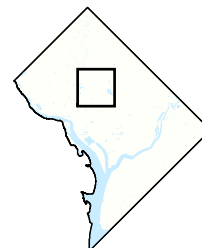
This map is for illustration only. It is neither a survey
nor a legal document. The use of this information is at
the sole risk of the user.

Neighborhood Clusters

Street Centerlines

Water

Parks

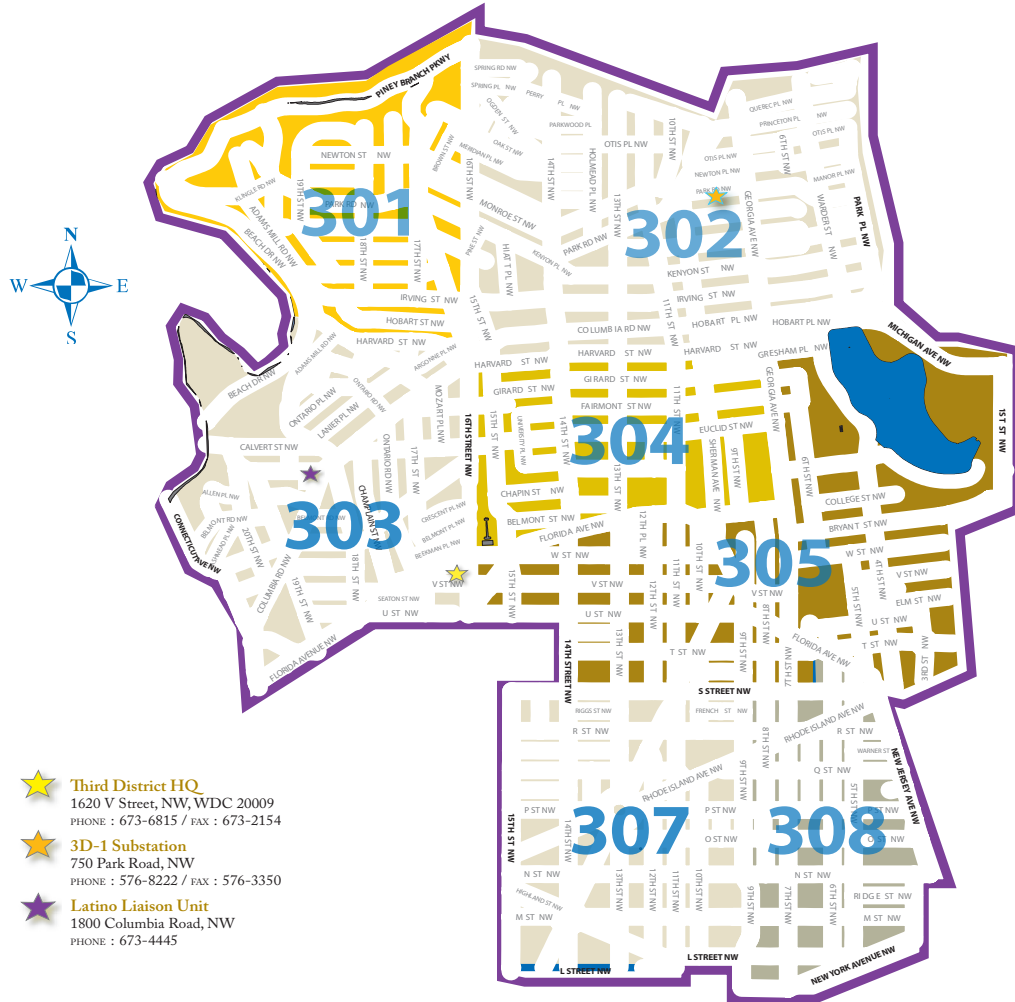


Neighborhood Cluster Two. Neighborhood Clusters are used in drafting local economic development plans.

Washington D.C. Office of Planning, <http://dc.planning.gov> (accessed 3/1/11).

THIRD DISTRICT

3D



Cathy L. Lanier
Chief of Police



Adrian M. Fenty
Mayor

Third Police District. Police Districts are used to organize the Metropolitan Police Department's distribution of patrols and other police service.
Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, D.C.,
<http://mpdc.gov> (accessed 3/1/11).

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